

**In Another World
With My
Smartphone:
Volume 12**

Patora Fuyuhara

VISIT...

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In Another World With My Smartphone

12

Patora Fuyuhara
Illustration • Eiji Usatsuka



"ALRIGHT, SEE
YOU GUYS
SOON!"

I SMILED TO THE
OTHERS, AND THEN
PASSED THROUGH
THE DOOR.

In Another World With My Smartphone 12



"Wait, that one's..."

"Hm? Oh, eek!

N-No, wait!

D-Don't look at...!"

IT WAS A STUFFED TOY THAT
RESEMBLED A YOUNG MAN. HE HAD
A WHITE COAT, AND BLACK PANTS.
IS THAT... ME? HEH... HE'S A LITTLE BIT
CUTER THAN I WOULD'VE EXPECTED...
IT SEEMED LIKE THE DOLL LINZE WAS
SCRAMBLING FOR WASN'T THE ONE
OF ME, HOWEVER.
THE ONE SHE'D BEEN FOCUSED
ON WAS ANOTHER ENTIRELY.

Character Profiles



Elze Silhoueska

One of Touya's fiancées. The elder of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. A ferocious melee fighter, she makes use of gauntlets in combat. Her personality is fairly to-the-point and blunt. She can make use of Null fortification magic, specifically the spell **[Boost]**. She loves spicy foods.



Yumina Urnea Belfast

One of Touya's fiancées. Princess of the Belfast Kingdom. She was twelve years old in her initial appearance, and her eyes are heterochromatic. The right is blue, while the left is green. She has mystic eyes that can discern the true character of an individual. She has three magical aptitudes: Earth, Wind, and Darkness. She's also extremely proficient with a bow and arrow. She fell in love with Touya at first sight.



Mochizuki Touya

A highschooler who was accidentally murdered by God. He's a no-hassle kind of guy who likes to go with the flow. He's not very good at reading the atmosphere, and typically makes rash decisions that bite him in the ass. His mana pool is limitless, he can flawlessly make use of every magical element, and he can cast any Null spell that he wants. He's currently the Grand Duke of Brunhild.



Sushie Urnea Ortlinde

One of Touya's fiancées. She was ten years old in her initial appearance. Her nickname is Sue. The niece of Belfast's king, and Yumina's cousin. Touya saved her from being attacked on the road. She has an innocently adventurous spirit.



Lucia Leah Regulus

One of Touya's fiancées. The Third Princess of the Regulus Empire, she's Yumina's age. She fell in love with Touya when he saved her during a coup. She likes to fight with twin blades, and she's on good terms with Yumina.



Kokonoe Yae

One of Touya's fiancées. A samurai girl from the far eastern land of Eashen, a country much like Japan. She tends to repeat herself and speak formally, she does. Yae is quite a glutton, eating more than most normal people would dare touch. She's a hard worker, but can sometimes slack off. Her family runs a dojo back in Eashen, and they take great pride in their craft. It's not obvious at first, but her boobs are pretty big.



Linze Silhoueska

One of Touya's fiancées. The younger of the twin sisters saved by Touya some time ago. She wields magic, specifically from the schools of Light, Water, and Fire. She finds talking to people difficult due to her own shy nature, but she is known to be surprisingly bold at times. Rumors say she might be the kind of girl who enjoys male on male romance... She loves sweet foods.



Paula

A stuffed toy bear animated by years upon years of the **[Program]** spell. She's the result of two-hundred years of programmed commands, making her seem like a fully aware living being. Paula... Paula's the worst!



Sakura

A mysterious girl Touya rescued in Eashen. She had lost her memories, but has now finally gotten them back. Her true identity is Farnese Forneus, daughter of the Xenoaahs Overlord. Currently living a peaceful life in Brunhild, and she has joined the ranks of Touya's fiancées.



Leen

One of Touya's fiancées. Former Clan Matriarch of the Fairies, she now serves as Brunhild's Court Magician. She claims to be six hundred-and-twelve years old, but looks tremendously young. She can wield every magical element except Darkness, meaning her magical proficiency is that of a genius. Leen is a bit of a light-hearted bully.



Hildegard Minas Lestia

One of Touya's fiancées. First Princess of the Knight Kingdom Lestia. Her swordplay talents earned her a reputation as a 'Knight Princess'. Touya saved her life when she was attacked by a group of Phrase, and she's loved him ever since. She's a good friend of Yae, and she stammers a bit when flustered.



The fourth of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Azure Monarch, the ruler of dragons. She often clashes with Kohaku due to her condescending personality.



The third of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She is the Flame Monarch, ruler of feathered things. Though her appearance is flashy and extravagant, she's actually quite cool and collected.



The second of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. They are the Black Monarch, two in one. The rulers of scaled beasts. They can freely manipulate water. Sango is a tortoise, and Kokuyou is a snake. Sango is a female, and Kokuyou is a male (but he's very much a female at heart).



The first of Touya's summoned Heavenly Beasts. She's the White Monarch, the ruler of beasts, the guardian of the west and a beautiful White Tiger. She can create devastating shockwaves, and also change size at will.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Workshop, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Rosetta for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #27. For whatever reason, she's the most reliable of the bunch.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hanging Garden, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Cesca for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #23. She likes to tell very inappropriate jokes.



The God of Swords. Claims to be Touya's older sister. She trains the and advises the knights of Brunhild. She's gallant and brave, but also a bit of an airhead at times.



The God of Love. Claims to be Touya's older sister. She stays in Brunhild because she says she needs to catch a servile god, but doesn't really do all that much in the way of hunting him. She's a total pain in the butt.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Tower, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Noël for short and wears a jersey. Her Airframe Serial Number is #25. She sleeps all the time, and eats laying down. Her tremendous laziness means she doesn't do all that much.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Rampart, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Liora for short and wears a blazer. Her Airframe Serial Number is #20. She's the oldest of the Babylon Gynoids, and would attend to the... Personal night-time needs of Doctor Babylon herself. She has no experience with men.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Hangar, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Monica for short. Her Airframe Serial Number is #28. She's a funny little hard worker who has a bit of a casual streak. She's a good friend of Rosetta, and is the Gynoid with the most knowledge of the Frame Gears.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Alchemy Lab, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Flôra for short and wears a nurse outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #21. A nurse with dangerously big boobs and even more dangerous medicines.



An ancient genius from a lost civilization, reborn into an artificial body that resembles a small girl. She is the "Babylon" that created the many artifacts and forgotten technologies scattered around the world today. Her Airframe serial number is #29. She remained in stasis for five-thousand years before finally being awakened.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Research Lab, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Tica for short. Her Airframe serial number is #22. Of the Babylon Numbers, she is the one who best embodies Doctor Babylon's inappropriately perverse side.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Storehouse, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Parshe for short and wears a shrine maiden outfit. Her Airframe Serial Number is #26. She's tremendously clumsy, even if she's just trying to help. The amount of stuff she ruins is troublingly high.



Terminal Gynoid in charge of the Library, one of the Babylon relics. She's called Fam for short and wears a school uniform. Her Airframe Serial Number is #24. She's a total book fanatic and hates being interrupted when she's reading.

Map of the World



The Story So Far!

Mochizuki Touya, wielding a smartphone customized by God himself, has made a name for himself in the new world. He is now Grand Duke of Brunhild, a nation formed of territory from both the Kingdom of Belfast and the Regulus Empire. Having rightfully inherited the ancient legacy of Babylon, Touya now commands a fleet of enormous humanoid mechs known as Frame Gears. Using his power, Touya has unified many nations of the world and created a collective defense force to repel the Phrase, monstrous invaders from another world. But still... North, East, South, and West... Trouble brews in all directions, and there are still many that have their eyes on his prize.

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Chapter I: The Reverse World

“It’s so hot...” Right after I settled the business in Sandora, summer had already made its way into Brunhild.

It wasn’t quite the heat of a scorching desert, but it was still pretty hot in its own way.

“**Blow forth, Wind! Gentle Squall: [Cool Wind] !**” I called a calming breeze along the balcony as Leen came along from indoors. Kohaku was sitting by my side. Paula came along with Leen, as was natural. As soon as she walked out on to the terrace, her silver twintails shook in the wind.

“Slacking off, are we? You’re gonna set a bad example for your subjects at this rate.”

“Keeping up appearances is a pain at times like this, you know? Hot things are hot, damn it...” I was surprised she was so calm and collected, given that her gothic lolita outfit looked pretty damn warm. As I pondered that, she walked closer to me, and the air began to chill. I figured out her trick, she’d used magic to wrap her body in the cool air. Leen was pretty tolerant of low temperatures, after all, so I wasn’t surprised she had a spell like that on hand.

“It seems we’ll need to bear with the heat a while longer. Even some of your townspeople have collapsed as a result of heatstroke.”

“Oh yeah? Guess we better stay hydrated, then.”

“A lot of people have been going through the portals to the dungeon islands lately. The environment is a lot cooler there. But there are still some magical beasts there, so we should really be careful about letting civilians through...” The islands had a windy breeze, so it was probably a lot more refreshing than the landlocked Brunhild. The nights were extremely unforgiving and cold, though.

“Anyway, that’s kind of why I came here... We should make a swimming zone on the islands.”

“Huh?”

“Lots of people wanted to cool off in the sea. It’d be a good chance to earn some income. Beverages, food, bathing suits, and general fees for teleporting there. It’d be a good chance, right?”

“Hoho... Sounds good to me.”

A voice called out from behind us. It was Kousaka.

“We have a lot of Sandoran immigrants now, right? So it’d be

good to make as much money as we possibly can. Well then, Ms. Leen, what did you have in mind?" Leen suddenly pulled out a map and spread it across the table.

"Well, look here. Here's a full map of the islands. This particular island doesn't have a dungeon on it, see? I was thinking of altering its coastline with Earth magic, allowing us to create a big, sandy beach. We'd also set down a special barrier that would ward away dangerous wildlife. On top of that, we'd create a new separate portal that leads there."

"Most fascinating... So you suggest we should create a separate portal from the ones that the guild manage?"

"That's right. We'll make the island impossible to access from the other ones, too. That way it can be completely self-sufficient, as well. After that, we'll see about constructing restaurants, tourist shops, and maybe even accommodation..."

"Hm... I like this. We could make a decent bit of money."

Hey, now! Don't leave me behind here, you two... Don't I get a say in this? It's me who you're gonna force into building everything, putting down the barrier, and terraforming the landscape, right? Right?!

"Don't worry too much. I'll help you out, it was my idea, after all."

Tsk... Sure, but I can't just leave everything to you and Doc Babylon, Leen... I'll help, don't worry.

"Kohaku... I think I'm gonna be working hard from here on out."

"Don't see this as them taking advantage of you, my liege. See it as them relying on your guidance and protection."

I guess you have a point... I was kind of in vacation mode, though... Well, no point whining about it I guess, but I really wanted to enjoy a summer vacation.

"This ought to do it..." I muttered to myself quietly as I rested my feet against the sand.

The pure white, gritty sand felt good beneath my feet. I entered the sea, and the sand was washed away... That felt good as well.

I didn't want people getting washed away from the shore and attacked by any monsters outside the barrier's radius, so I set up buoys marking the safe zone.

The barrier was near-perfect, so there was nothing dangerous inside its effective range. Even kids wouldn't have an issue swimming around. Accidents were still possible, though, so I decided that stationing a coast guard and medical team at the beach would be wise.

I had set up a similar beach on a smaller island nearby, as well. That was a private beach for me and immediate family.

I didn't think wanting to have some private time was unreasonable.

“Alright, that’s that. Now all I’ve gotta do is build the portal.”

“Let’sss leave it be a little longer. It’ss been sssso long ssince I’ve enjoyed the ssea, darling.”

“Mh... I agree with Kokuyou. We’re aquatic creatures, in the end...” Kokuyou and Sango were swimming in the sea. It looked like they were having a fun time.

“I know how you feel, but we have stuff to do. You guys can use the private beach whenever, alright? Let’s head back for today.”

“That’sss a ssshame...” Kokuyou and Sango came up out of the sea.

Now all I had to do was think about what came after the gate building. I had Fashion King Zanac take charge of bathing suit sales, food stalls were entrusted to Micah from the Silver Moon, and the other general stuff like sandals, beach towels, parasols, beach balls, floats, and so on were all handled by Olba Strand.

All that came after that was assigning lifeguards.

Several members of our knight order were talented enough swimmers, so I decided to station them as lifeguards during the summer season. They’d be our lifesavers, after all.

I also had no issue with the other knights coming to enjoy the beach during their off-duty hours. And with that, the preparations would finally be complete, and we’d be able to go ahead with opening the beach to the public.

And so, a few days later...

It was a complete and utter success. Leen and Kousaka’s projections were spot-on, and the beach was packed almost every day. There were so many people, even folks from Regulus and Belfast had shown up. It sounded like word was spreading fast.

It made sense that they’d come from there, though. They weren’t really spoiled for choice in terms of leisure destinations, and most citizens never got the chance to enjoy the sea.

Naturally, a place with so many people would result in disputes and spats. Our knights were generally on call to deal with any arguments that broke out between the patrons. I’d ended up increasing their workload a fair bit... I made a mental note to increase their salaries out of my own pocket.

“Alright, time for me to take it easy...”

“You’ve been working hard lately, Touya.” I was resting underneath a parasol, trying to get a little bit of relaxation in. Yumina was here too, talking to me as she wore a frilly one-piece swimsuit.

We were at the private beach, an area of land restricted only to my immediate family.

Elze, Yae, and Hilde were playing smash the watermelon with Moroha. Linze and Leen were chatting beneath the shade. Lu was

making lunch along with Crea, while Sue and Sakura played pass the beach ball with Karen.

Karina was spearfishing off the coast, while Suika was wasting her time being blackout drunk. I could hear a ukulele being played, so I assumed that was Sousuke's doing. Kousuke wasn't here, since he was likely tending to his crops.

"My, my... We have a young harem master relaxing in the sun, do we? How miserable... You should be doing naughtier things than that."

"Zip it."

Cesca prattled on as usual while she swilled around a tropical drink in her hand. It wasn't a typical harem situation! There was another guy here! He just... happened to be out of sight, playing the ukulele elsewhere.

I invited all the Babylon numbers over, but Rosetta, Doctor Babylon, and Monica were too busy with maintenance. Noel was sleeping, and Liora couldn't leave her alone. Fam said she didn't want to leave the library... Flora was stationed in the medical office, so she had work to take care of. As for Parshe and Tica... I didn't really want that klutz or that kiddy diddler hanging around us on a relaxed day.

"Whatever happened to your youthful vigor? Shouldn't you be leering at these bathing-suit-clad ladies? Or perhaps such a thing isn't necessary... Could it be...?! You have a hidden sense that can see through our clothes?!"

"Like hell I do!"

Yumina covered her chest and groin with her hands, turning beet red in the process.

Didn't I just say I couldn't?! Actually... I probably can with my divinity... But I have no intentions of doing that. For now, at least.

I shooed Cesca away and reassured Yumina. I didn't want any weird rumors going around about me. What a pain in the ass that'd be...

"We could've invited father over, couldn't we?"

"Ah... I mean... I think the other world leaders would probably get jealous if I gave Belfast preferential treatment... They'd want to come, too." Things were different now, there were a lot more world leaders in my social circle. If I only called over the king of Belfast, then the others would probably complain... It'd only be natural that they'd end up demanding to come over as well.

There was no way I'd be able to relax if all those guys were running around my private beach. I'd invite them some other time, but in all honesty, I just wanted a little relaxation time to myself.

"It's still pretty strange... Until you came along, gathering so many world leaders in co-operation was considered just a pipe dream."

“I’m glad they’re getting along, though. Still, not everyone can get along. That’s just how some people are.” The king of Sandora came to mind.

The situation in Sandora was a little different to the situation in Yulong, since I directly instigated the downfall in this case. Then again, they did shoot first.

Ultimately, I was a little bit irritated that I ended up doing exactly what the other world leaders wanted me to. At the very least, I could rest easy with the knowledge that I wasn’t going to end up any more infamous as a result of what happened. The freed slaves scattered across the nations and had nothing but good things to say about what had happened.

《My liege, is now a good time?》

《Hm? Kougyoku? What’s up?》

Kougyoku should’ve been at the castle, so I wondered why she decided to send me a telepathic message.

《Well, you see... It’s related to that mysterious island. One of the barrier-protected capitals, the southern one, is under attack by Behemoths right now.》

《Behemoths? Don’t they have catapults and ballistas to ward them off? 》

《That would work under ordinary circumstances, but the city is being sieged by multiple types of Behemoths.》

That sounded pretty bad... I figured that the barriers probably had their own limits, and probably wouldn’t last against a sustained assault from multiple ends.

Ultimately, a defensive barrier was just a really big magical shield, so it would eventually run out of juice and go out.

It was still different from a conventional shield, though. Regular shields would eventually break if a single point was targeted by something weak for an extended period of time, even if it would take as long as it would for a drop of water to pierce stone.

That wouldn’t happen to a barrier. Let’s say a barrier had a power level, and this power level was ranked at ten. A person with a power level of nine could attack the shield forever and they would never actually weaken it. Barriers didn’t degrade over time, either. Not even a little bit.

The issue would be that if something with a power level higher than ten came along and attacked the barrier, then the barrier would collapse.

If we use this model and say that the shields on the island were set to a power level of ten, then it wouldn’t even matter if the magical beasts on the island could attack with a power level of nine. But... if the creatures attacked at the same time... Let’s say two beasts with a

power level of nine attacked the barrier at once. It would create a combined power of eighteen, causing the structural collapse of the barrier.

I had nothing but conjecture to go on, but it was probable that the combined attacks of multiple Behemoths would be enough to break down the barrier.

I wondered if they were intelligent enough to coordinate their attacks... It was probably just a case of poor timing, honestly.

《Why is the city being attacked by multiple Behemoths?》

《From what I understand, a Behemoth hunting trip went wrong. They were routed back to the city and it followed. Along the way, they happened to run into two other Behemoths, and those creatures gave pursuit as well.》 So it really was just a case of bad timing. The hunters kept running into more Behemoths, and instead of fighting each other, the monsters targeted the humans. I wondered if they were provoked, or just naturally inclined to target people...

There were three Behemoths, all different types.

The first was an ape-type, Heavy Kong.

The second was a pig-type, Grand Boar.

And the third was an ungulate-type, Power Bison.

That was it.

It seemed like the city was targeting them individually. They were trying their best to repel them from the city. Still, it was surely something that would take the sacrifice of many of their soldiers.

There were also those that believed they should wait it out, and merely let the creatures whale on the barrier until they get tired and leave. That didn't mean that the barrier would hold, though. If it broke, the people would surely die.

It was a situation where they had to either kill before they were killed or bolster their defenses and leave it all up to fate.

And here I was, not entirely sure what to do. If I was planning on making contact with the island, I could see no better time than the present. I wasn't going to pretend this wasn't slightly advantageous. If I saved them, they'd owe me. That would come in handy during the negotiation phase.

The countries on the continent at large hoped for a trade arrangement, so all I had to do was communicate that. Plus, if I removed the barrier around the island, the Behemoths would likely decrease in quantity.

No matter how I saw it, there wasn't really a drawback to interfering.

There are three Behemoths, so I'll take Elze, Yae, and Hilde... Lu's Frame Gear is still getting tweaked, so I can't take her over yet.

Lu's Frame Gear was a specialized unit built for guerrilla assault,

which meant that we had to make a lot of gear for it to truly take advantage of its versatility. It meant that we had to wait a little longer until it could make its debut.

“Alright. Guess I should get ready... Well, my break was nice while it lasted.”

“We can come back any time, don’t worry!” Yumina comforted me as I turned to Elze and the others, who were now tucking into their smashed watermelon.

Hm, come to think of it... I better call the knight order over, too... If we go in with just three Frame Gears we might find ourselves in trouble. Don’t want the islanders thinking we’re not all that tough, either.

I didn’t like displaying our power in a flashy manner, but the incident in Sandora showed me that it did have its merits now and then.

In the end, it was just laying the groundwork for the inevitable peace and trade talks. If they attacked us without a word, we’d easily disable them.

I seriously hope that the people living on the island are reasonable...



I tapped into the senses of the bird I’d sent to the island and used its sight to generate a [Gate] there.

The amount of magic required to sustain the portal actually took over five times as much power as it usually would. It was likely the effect of the barrier. It was so bad that if I stopped channeling my magic for even a second, the portal would’ve closed. If we had decided to go to the island on one of our magic-powered vehicles, we’d have probably crashed right into the island upon reaching the effective range.

“Alright, did it...” I could see the southern city in the distance. It looked like a fortress, almost. It had massive walls, with strategic ballistas installed along several checkpoints around the sides.

And I could see the three Behemoths surrounding the city as well.

The ape-like Behemoth, Heavy Kong, was furiously smashing its fists against the barrier. Each strike caused the protective dome to briefly materialize and shimmer in the air.

The massive pig, Grand Boar, kept running away from the city before turning and charging wildly into the barrier.

Lastly, the massive Power Bison kept jabbing and thrashing against the barrier with its drill-like horns.

They were all attacking from different points, but the people inside were focusing their fire on the Grand Boar in particular.

“Heh... So the barrier only prevents living things from coming in or out? Well, I’m not too surprised...” If the barrier prevented the

people from countering, they wouldn't be able to repel invaders. There were a lot of similarly constructed barriers protecting major cities in other countries as well.

Still, the ballista fire wasn't really doing all that much. There were several projectiles stuck in the beast's body, but most of it was being deflected by its thick hide. Its hide probably had some kind of magically boosted thickness going on... Probably.

Hmm... I'm not entirely sure how long this thing's gonna hold up. If this thing has a power level of ten, then my best guess is that the Heavy Kong has a power level of three, Grand Boar is five, and the Power Bison is four...

That meant that the barrier would be fine so long as only two of the beasts attacked it, but it'd go down if all three attackers connected their blows at once.

Heavy Kong was attacking constantly, but it seemed unlikely that Grand Boar and Power Bison's attacks would come in at the same time. I didn't really want to run the risk, though.

"Guess we won't be able to open negotiations before it's too late at this rate... Let's just do what we can for now." I took out my smartphone and called the others back in Brunhild, and then opened up a big **[Gate]** in the sky.

Hundreds of Frame Gears began filing out one by one, making the very ground shudder as they landed.

"Alright. Elze, Heavy Kong is yours, Yae, you go for Grand Boar, and Hilde can take the Power Bison. Everyone else remain on standby. Keep an eye out for any other monsters in the area."

"Understood!" The red, purple, and orange Frame Gears all went off toward their respective targets.

"Alright! Time to bust some heads!"

"I will do my best, I will!"

"Onward!"

Elze and the others reached the monsters and raised their weapons. The Behemoths seemed to notice the new threat, and each took up offensive poses.

The Heavy Kong began attacking Elze's Gerhilde. But the scarlet Frame Gear masterfully tanked the strike, launching a reactive cross-counter punch straight toward the ape's stomach.

"Get wrecked!" With a resounding crunch, the pile bunker launched from Gerhilde's wrist and penetrated the Behemoth's chest. Blood began to pour wildly from the wound as the massive beast fell down, dead.

Yae began engaging the Grand Boar. She wasted no time, her Schwertleite flying into the creature's side and slicing it cleanly in two with a single strike. It all happened unreasonably fast. The massive pig

simply fell to the ground in two halves, dead.

As that happened, Hilde's Siegrune held its own against the Power Bison's horns. Her shield completely blocked its attack, and she used the moment of recoil as her chance to decapitate the vile creature.

The battle was over just as soon as it began. The three creatures were dead within a mere minute of meeting the Frame Gears. I was honestly taken aback, as I hadn't expected this kind of swift turnaround.

After beating the three Behemoths, the Frame Gears moved back a bit from the city and lined up before the main gate. From behind them, a glimmering white Frame Gear, the Shining Count, stepped forward.

I stood on the shoulder of the white machine, using my magic to project several sound amplifiers and speakers into the air. Then, I turned on my microphone and began to address the people inside the city.

"We are members of the Duchy of Brunhild, a sovereign nation located on the continent to the south of your island. We have no hostile intent. We seek an audience with your political representatives. We will wait an hour for your response, thank you."

We gave them an hour time limit because we didn't want them to waste a bunch of time squabbling over who would represent who.

I didn't want them thinking it'd just be fine to ignore us because of their barrier, I wanted to actually talk to someone. I did mention we weren't hostile, but they would probably still be a little bit freaked out by what was going on.

Ideally, they'd have some kind of mayor or chief they could send, but I could easily see that person being wary of a trap. It was possible they'd just send a messenger out, but that'd be fine. That'd be enough to get the ball rolling, at least.

"Think they'll come out?"

"I'm not actually sure... Well, if these guys don't come out we'll just go to another city."

I shrugged slightly at Lain's question. Still, it'd be a pain if we had to go to another city. We already saved this one from Behemoths, so they had the highest chance of being grateful to us. I wouldn't be too surprised if the natives of the other settlements ended up freaking out and attacking us or something. Ideally, this city would become friends with us, then tell the other cities.

I called over Kougyoku and asked her what was going on in the city.

"The town's in an uproar. They're looking at us cautiously, and arming their defensive weapons as best they can."

"Makes sense..." I didn't know what they'd agreed on, but it

seemed like they were pre-emptively prepping their defenses. Apparently, they hadn't made a proper decision yet.

If we did anything weird, they'd probably shoot on reflex, so I decided the best thing to do was just sit tight. It was a little tedious, though. I grumbled a bit as I lay back on the Shining Count's shoulder and looked up at the sky.

"Your Highness, their gates are opening."

"Oh, seriously?" Lain had been in the Shining Count's cockpit and keeping an eye out, so the moment she told me of the development I hopped down to the ground.

A group of horse-riding knights made their way toward us. They were all in full-body armor, and they looked pretty serious.

Their armor design was pretty wildly different to anything I'd seen before. I figured they probably hadn't developed much since the time of the ancient civilization. It was possible that they'd just technologically stagnated as they tried to eke out a living on this small landmass.

I stood in front of the Frame Gears, and the knights stopped around ten meters away from me. Then, a lone knight, who wore a particularly weathered looking robe above his battered plate armor, moved forward.

He came a little closer and dismounted his horse, continuing his progression on foot. His headgear kind of reminded me of an Ancient Greek, Corinthian helmet. It had a decorative crest on the top and a small T-shaped gap for him to see out of.

It wasn't the closed type you might see in anime or other tv shows, so his face was fully exposed for me to see.

He was a large man and had a serious expression on his face. His eyes were glaring right at me. I couldn't sense any hostility from him, but I felt that he was anxious.

"My name is Dyent South, representative of Meridius, the Southern Capital. I am one of the Four High-Brothers, and descendant of Freyend South. Thank you for your assistance against the beasts. Now, who are you, stranger?"

"I am Mochizuki Touya. Touya's my given name. I am the grand duke of Brunhild. It's a pleasure to meet you, Representative Dyent." His eyes went wide when I introduced myself as royalty, which meant he recognized the title at least... Regardless, he reached out to shake my hand. His attitude became a little more relaxed after I took him up on the gesture. Little by little, we were making progress.

"Grand Duke, you say? Is it true that you came from a landmass to the south...? Do you mean to say that the world was not destroyed?"

"I see... It's just as we thought, then. Your ancestors must have cut off ties with the outside world before Partheno was wiped out. No, the

world was not destroyed. There are many nations that exist peacefully even now.”

I used my smartphone to project a world map. It was full and complete, even including this very island.

“This is the world as it exists now.”

“A-Ah...” Dyent looked up at the map with an awestruck expression.

“This is your island, here. And here is the Duchy of Brunhild. It’s a small country, but these giant warriors... the Frame Gears, are a legacy left behind from Partheno. We’re the only country on the planet that can operate them, and other countries have steered clear of trying to attack us because of that.”

“Incredible...” I didn’t want him thinking Brunhild wasn’t important just because it was small, so I stretched the truth a little. It was true that Brunhild had never been invaded, but we were also only about a year old. Well, we did have that war with Sandora... but they didn’t invade. It was over in fifteen minutes.

“I-If I might be honest... we all truly believed that the outside world was gone... that it was devoured by the crystal beasts and now belonged to them.”

“From what I understand, the ancient civilization was destroyed. But the people managed to rebuild. Here, let’s sit down and talk things through, alright? I’m sure we have a lot to ask each other.”

“H-Hm... Very well.”

I pulled a large table and a couple of chairs out of **[Storage]**. Representative Dyent blinked in surprise at the sudden appearance of the stuff, but he cautiously took a seat.



The first thing I was told was the name of the island. The place was known to its inhabitants as Palerius Island. It was named for the Partheno mage that founded the civilization there. Alerius Palerius, The Sage of Hours.

He’d come to the island a long time ago, due to its reputation as a dangerous place. It was here he’d discovered a structure that could naturally create barriers. He took the territory and claimed it as his experimentation grounds. His magic was so immense that he had no way of telling what kind of damage it could cause, so an uninhabited mystery island was an ideal location for him to test stuff out.

He eventually died in Partheno, and the Phrase invasion broke out. His younger brother, who sensed the oncoming danger, evacuated their extended family, many children, friends, and Palerius’ disciples to the island, and then cut it off from the outside world.

They’d used hidden treasures left behind by Palerius to further

strengthen the barrier so the Phrase couldn't get inside. But that also meant that, while the invaders couldn't get to them, nobody could leave the island either.

Palerius' four main disciples were convinced that the devastation the Phrase brought about would be enough to annihilate the entire world. They firmly believed that everyone outside the island was gone.

"So you guys were sealed in here, huh?"

"Somewhat, but it didn't feel like imprisonment... We thought that the crystal crea— er... the Phrase... had ruined the planet. We believed everything outside had been conquered by them... We thought we were the only ones who were safe. We had expeditions in the past, to the outside world, but every boat just seemed to loop around through the fog and end up back at port."

That was likely the effect of one of the barriers. It caused the fog surrounding the island to confuse navigation and bring you back to the start.

I was filled in on most of the stuff concerning the island, so I decided to broach the actual topic at hand.

Specifically, I wanted to ask if they intended to interact with the outside world. Also, if they wanted to take down the barrier and reduce the number of Behemoths that developed in the area.

"Well, the only downside would be that if I take down your barrier, the Phrase could appear on the island now and then..."

"Ah, actually... I don't think that would be an issue. These crystal beasts... We've seen them on the island before."

"Wait, what?!" I asked him what he meant, and he went on to explain that the Phrase had appeared twice over the last two years. Both appearances were minor, some Lesser Constructs poking their heads around. The islanders managed to subdue them. But even so, the people of the island were scared by the sudden appearance of the legendary ancient monsters they were supposed to be hidden from.

They could defend against an external Phrase invasion, but couldn't defend against the Phrase manifesting on their island.

In other words, the Phrase in this world couldn't reach the island by penetrating the barrier, but they could directly cross through to this world into space that already existed on the island.

It really made me wonder what kind of use that barrier served to begin with. It couldn't stop the Phrase entirely, it prevented the people from escaping, it made Behemoths rapidly gestate... The more I learned about it the worse off it seemed.

"What you say is true... but, well... Please don't take offense to this, Grand Duke, but we can't fully accept what it is you've told us. We have no way of telling if you've brought us truth or lies."

That wasn't really unreasonable. I'd just appeared out of nowhere with a story that undermined the very basis of their existence... As loath I was to admit it, I was highly suspicious here.

"On top of that, I cannot make a judgment call on behalf of the entire island. I would need to talk with the representatives North, East, and West. I would also need to talk to Lord Central."

"Lord Central?"

"Lord Central Palerius, yes. A direct descendant of Alerius Palerius' bloodline. The barrier around the island is the legacy of his family, Lord Central is the one that guards The Door."

"Uh... The Door?"

"The Door is a mighty artifact that Alerius constructed during his lifetime. He created it with the hopes that, upon completion, we would be able to use it to migrate to a new world. His four disciples tried as best as they could after he died, but they could never get it to activate." I immediately thought of my own portal spell from the way he was describing it. I wondered if he planned to escape the island by using this door thing... But if he had started creating it during his lifetime, then that meant he must have started making it before his disciples came to the island... And before the Phrase invasion, even. Something didn't quite add up. I wondered if his disciples had tried to make something of it but just hadn't been successful after he died... It was hard to say for sure.

"Then... could you talk to the other town representatives and this Lord Central? If they refuse us, that'll be fine. Should that happen we'll leave the island and never come back, promise. The other countries won't be able to come here with an intact barrier, either."

"...Very well. If you ask my personal opinion, however, I would like to be rid of the barrier. Every day, humanity on this island receives a grim reminder. We live in fear of the Behemoths."

"Ah, that reminds me... We'll go around and take out a bunch of Behemoths while we're here. We'll take most of their resources as payment, though. I'm sure you understand."

I scheduled to meet up again with Representative Dyent two weeks later and absconded from the island shortly afterward.

I was pretty satisfied with how things had gone. It didn't make me feel bad like Sandora had.

I still wondered who it was that had repaired the boundary of the world all those years ago. Initially, I thought it was the Sage of Hours, but apparently, he had died before that managed to happen.

It could've been his four disciples, but clearly, they had tried their best to keep the island secluded from the rest of the world, so it wouldn't add up if they'd done it. Ende didn't even know, either... What a pickle.

I had no choice but to figure out how to fix the broken seams myself. But I required more finesse and fine-tuning of my own divinity before I could do that. God Almighty told me that it'd require the same level of precision it would take to repair a spiderweb by hand... What a pain in the ass that would be.

It would probably just be easier to kill all of the Phrase. But even if they vanished, there'd be other negative effects of the world's boundary having holes in it. The Phrase weren't the only creatures that could pass through, after all. I didn't really want a villain-of-the-week situation coming through the dimensional holes all the time.

I wondered if Central Palerius would be able to teach me anything about how the island barriers worked.

It wouldn't be too unreasonable to expect he'd know something. Plus, I was interested in seeing just what Palerius' legacy was...

Almost two weeks had passed since my encounter with Representative Dyent.

I'd been watching them through Kougyoku's birds, so I was fairly aware of how the situation was developing on their end.

The Representative from the north seemed hesitant, but he calmed down once central spoke up in favor of meeting us and learning our intentions. They didn't necessarily believe me, but they wanted to hear it straight from my mouth.

I was just glad they were willing to listen. Talking was preferable to the alternative.

I'd spoken to the members of the alliance about my meeting with the people of Palerius. The alliance all seemed fine, but I also made sure that they informed Palouf, Elfrau, Hannock, and any other nations that might be curious. For trade purposes, they had to be aware of how things were going to work.

I didn't want any renegade traders going to Palerius and causing havoc.

"Still... This is old man Palerius' legacy, huh? I'm pretty curious... Wonder what it is."

"Were you friends with him?"

"Well, kind of. He was a bit of an eccentric. You know that artifact that I used to view you in the future? That was his doing. Well, the theory at least. Old man Palerius' writings were the basis for a lot of my research."

Damn... This freaky doctor thinks he was a weirdo? He must have been off the scale in eccentricity... Apparently, the old man hated doing anything for his country, and he didn't obey state orders. He simply liked to go off and research with his disciples.

"Touya, can you take me along to the island with you? I really wanna know what this thing is that he left there."

“Uh... I guess? Just don't do anything weird, okay? The situation's pretty tenuous as it is.”

“Oh please, don't sweat the small stuff. I know the situation well enough not to do anything dumb. How about you have a little faith in your mistress?”

“I don't remember allowing you to be my mistress.”

Babylon and I were in the hangar's garage area, talking about the situation. Monica suddenly called out from atop an overhead crane.

“Listen, you two... Can you like, totally get outta here?! I cannot concentrate when you're prattling on...”



“Ah, sorry about that. I’ll go check on the vehicles or something...”

“That’s like, done already and stuff. I’d suggest you look into the vocal magic regulators for Sakura’s Frame Gear. The upload isn’t quite complete yet.”

“Sounds good to me.” We left the garage and Doctor Babylon clambered up to the cockpit of a stationary Frame Gear in a separate garage nearby. It was cherry blossom-colored with twinges of white mixed in. The Frame Gear was named Rossweisse, and it was Sakura’s support-type unit.

It had two large trumpet-like horns that extended from the back and rested on each shoulder. They kind of looked like cannons, honestly... It was newly-developed tech that was designed to amplify Sakura’s music. They had offensive purposes too, though; they could amplify sound waves using air pressure... Or something like that, anyway. They could also retract out of the way when they weren’t needed. That would stop the massive things from impeding the Frame Gear’s movement when it was time to run.

I left that garage and went to another one opposite. This one had a dazzling emerald Frame Gear inside.

Rosetta was seated in the cockpit, and there was a small legion of mini-bots scuttling around it, helping her with this and that.

This Frame Gear was Lu’s. It was a high-spec Frame Gear designed for guerrilla operations, Waltraute.

It was capable of using various different kinds of gear, depending on the situation. It had close-quarters weaponry, long-distance weaponry, heavy weapons, or stuff to help with speed. Naturally, that meant that while it was a jack of all trades, it was master of none.

It wasn’t as strong as the other Frame Gears, but it was still a Frame Gear. It had the strength to survive in battle against the Phrase, of that I was certain.

Provided things went alright on the island, we’d be able to test out these Frame Gears by having them kill a couple Behemoths there or something. Either way, we’d be talking with them soon...

I set off to meet with the Representative, and he was waiting there with a group of armored knights much like last time.

I, in turn, just like last time, had brought around a hundred Frame Gears with me.

“Good day, Representative Dyent. Have you spoken to the others?” I already knew the situation on their end thanks to Kougyoku, but I needed to feign ignorance.

“I have. Everyone wishes to meet you, including Lord Central. We’ve also decided upon how we wish to handle our relationship with

you. It may cause you some trouble, but would you kindly come to the Central Temple on the island with us?”

“The Central Temple? Very well. We can go there with my magic.”

“Hm?” I opened up a huge **[Gate]** to swallow up everyone in the area. We came out on a hill close to the temple. Kougyoku’s birds acted as my eyes for a while, so I’d seen the vast majority of the island. Therefore it was easy for me to open up a portal to anywhere on it.

“Th-This...?”

“We’re at the Central Temple...?! But how?!” The native knights looked around in confusion. They had seen my portal magic when I brought the Frame Gears over, but they mustn’t have ever expected to experience it themselves. Dyent looked a little unsettled as he ordered a messenger to walk to the temple. The other representatives had already gathered in there, apparently, so there was no issue for us to all go inside and begin negotiations.

I sent about half of their knights back to the Southern capital with another large **[Gate]**. I didn’t want their citizens freaking out about their warriors suddenly vanishing or anything, after all. That would’ve been a pain.

I left behind Lain and the other Brunhild knights and headed toward the Central Temple. I was going there with Doctor Babylon, Yae, and Kohaku. The latter two were ostensibly with me as guards, but I didn’t really need them.

Doc Babylon rode on top of Kohaku’s back, her baggy white lab coat fluttering in the breeze. *You should’ve asked Zanac for a better-fitting outfit...*

Eventually, we made it to the temple, a large cylindrical structure about six stories high. It kind of looked like a straight version of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The one on Earth was a little taller, though.

Dyent led us up a stairwell and inside the main temple area. It kind of felt like an ancient ruin in terms of atmosphere. It must’ve been built during the ancient civilization’s heyday, around five-thousand years back.

“This place is in excellent condition, it is.”

“It’s likely enchanted against age and wear, much like my Babylon installations. Stopping the effects of time on an object wouldn’t have been much trouble for that old man...” Doctor Babylon gave a simple reply to Yae’s bewildered reaction. She raised a fair point. If the Sage of Hours had mastered Space-time magic, there was no reason to assume he wouldn’t be able to easily do something like this.

We passed a couple of guards and headed up a spiral staircase, then walked down a long corridor. We opened up a large door and

came out into a spacious room. It seemed to be a meeting room.

There were two men and two women seated in the room. They were around a circular table, smack-bang in the middle of the place. There were also a few guards dotted around, too.

Three of the people seated wore similar armor to Dyent. The people in that clothing consisted of a young man, an old man, and a young woman with red hair.

They were likely the representatives of the other capital cities.

The last person was clad in white robes. She leaned against a rough and knobbly wooden cane. Her hair was auburn and wavy, it went down to her waist. My best estimate was that she was in her late twenties. She smiled gently in our general direction. She looked a fair bit older than the other woman present.

Yae and I entered the room, followed by Kohaku with Doctor Babylon on her back. Everyone looked surprised, but they calmed once no hostility was shown. That was only natural, really.

The white-clad woman extended her arm toward me after standing up.

“Good day, Grand Duke of Brunhild. I am Mentor Palerius, descendant of Alerius Palerius. I’m the one who guides the island. Your mentor, if you will.”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Mochizuki Touya, Grand Duke of Brunhild.”

I shook her hand firmly. She seemed to be the island’s general representative. Then, three others began to introduce themselves. The old, grey-haired man was the representative of the eastern city, Morgan East.

The young, brown-haired man was the representative of the northern city, Sagitta North.

Last but not least, the red-haired woman was the representative of the western city, Millie West.

Including Dyent South, that made four cardinal directions, which their surnames happened to signify pretty clearly.

It was possible that they were ancient titles that had slowly morphed into family names. I had no way of telling for sure, though. It was a little bit amusing, since their surnames were in plain English, but I didn’t really pay that any heed.

I sat down at the table and began to explain to them all exactly what it was that I’d told Dyent.

I projected the map up into the air and began to explain current affairs, global events, the Phrase invasion, why their island had so many Behemoths, and how to negate their barrier.

“I told Dyent this already, but you can freely reject what I’m saying here. We’d like to co-operate with you all, but we don’t want to

force you into an agreement. If your representatives ask that we withdraw, then we will leave and we won't come back any time soon."

"Can I ask a couple of questions?" Representative Millie raised her hand. I nodded toward her.

"Should we decide to reject your proposal, will other nations leave our island alone?"

"Your island's protective barrier is extremely powerful. The only reason we've been able to make contact with you at all is due to qualities unique to the Duchy of Brunhild. There's no reason for you to expect any other visitors."

"And if we accept your proposal, if the barrier comes down... might we be at risk of invasion from other nations?"

"They'd need a fairly large fleet of ships to even try taking this island, honestly... Let's assume that a country did wage war on your island and invade. I don't believe they'd be able to penetrate the barriers protecting your major cities. The Behemoth presence on your island would also make a land invasion difficult. I can't say for certain, but I don't believe you'd be at any immediate risk." There'd be fewer Behemoths after the collapse of the barrier, but it would still take the efforts of a traitor from within to take out the defenses of this island.

That was just hypothetical, though. I didn't believe the island had much in terms of worth. There wasn't much in the way of farmland, and there was almost no productive capability going on either. They had mines, and such, but not enough to justify waging war.

It was true that Behemoths were valuable, dead or alive, but fighting them would incur considerable losses.

There was no nation around that had enough national power or naval power to invade the island to begin with. Well, it was possible Yulong might have tried it, but they were gone. Still, if they were around and they had tried it, it would've just been an excuse to trash them.

I didn't know much about Xenoahs, but I felt like they'd try to mop up Yulong territory first if they wanted to expand.

Still, if the island truly had so little worth, I could understand people being confused about why I was reaching out to them. In truth, I just wanted to connect with them and find out more. It was ultimately up to the islanders whether or not they wanted to reach out to the world, though. I was of the belief that such a unique culture could offer a lot to the world, and vice versa.

Plus, it'd be good for the people who were currently living in fear of Behemoths that roamed around freely.

"Grand Duke, I've heard you'll exterminate several Behemoths on

our island if we remove the barrier. Is that true?" Morgan, the eastern representative, lobbed a question my way. I looked out the window shutters to my left. There was a Frame Gear standing by there, I began to speak as my gaze remained on it.

"We fight against the Phrase with our Frame Gears. In terms of fighting, Behemoths make good target practice for the newer models. We'll also take the carcasses back to Brunhild with us when we're done, but we'd happily give you a cut. That's because we're asking you to allow us to hunt on your land..." Morgan began to think to himself as he slumped down in his seat. This time, it was Mentor Central who raised her hand.

"Grand Duke, you spoke of removing the barrier around this island, but I must ask... Just how do you intend to do that? The barrier erected by Sage Alerius covers the entire island. There is an artifact in the basement of this temple that controls it, but the artifact itself is surrounded by several impenetrable barriers of its own..." I had expected as much. I reached into my pocket and pulled out a small magical tool. It somewhat resembled a syringe.

"This is an artifact that can nullify the effects of other artifacts. To be blunt, it can completely negate those smaller barriers protecting the basement artifact. If we use this item, we can completely strip the barrier around the island, and it'll never return. This item can only be used once, though." I put the Initializer on the table, and everyone seated craned their necks to look a little closer at it.

I took it back, then held it out to Mentor Central.

"You can have this. Whether or not it's used is down to you." I understood their apprehension. They still believed the barrier to be the only thing keeping them safe. It was only natural that they'd need time to think about it, they probably needed time to process what I'd told them.

Mentor Central silently gazed at the item in her hand.

"Hypothetically... could you use your abilities to emigrate only those who want to leave the island, Grand Duke? Would there be a nation out there that would accept migrants from this place?" That was interesting, I wasn't sure if they'd ask that. What Mentor Palerius was suggesting was a situation in which the barrier was maintained, but those that wanted to leave could still choose to do so.

"I could do that, yes. And I'm fairly sure there'd be nations willing to accept them... But I don't suggest taking that approach. The people you send out there would have to start their lives again with nothing." The threat of Behemoths would be gone, but they'd have a hard time adjusting to life off the island. They'd have no contacts out there, nor would they know what skills they'd need. It'd be even harder if they brought families.

“Whatever you suggest to me is irrelevant, now. You have the Initializer tool. Whatever is decided will be your decision. You can choose to bring the barrier down, or you can choose to keep it up. We will respect your choice in the end. Please think it over.”

“...Thank you. We will deliberate on this subject once more, I believe!” Mentor Central bowed her head to me.

I decided it would be best to leave it there for the day. If they wanted to remove the barrier, we’d help them. If they didn’t, we’d leave them alone. Even if they decided to do it dozens of years down the line, that was their choice. But if they waited that long, I probably wouldn’t be able to help them as easily.

Doc Babylon suddenly tugged at my sleeve.

Oh, right. I totally forgot.

“Actually, I wanted to ask you guys something.”

“What is it? We’ll answer if it’s at all possible.”

“The Sage of Hours, Alerius Palerius... I understand he left something behind? Something known as the Door? I’d like to see it, if possible.”

“The Door, you say? That won’t be an issue. I will allow you to see it as thanks for granting us that magical tool. It isn’t exactly a state secret, so you should be fine...” Mentor Central smiled in my general direction, but Sagitta North suddenly butted in with a flustered look on his face.

“Lord Central. There’s quite a risk in bringing an outsider to see Lord Alerius’ legacy, don’t you think...? If it were to be destroyed...”

“We barely understand it ourselves, don’t be silly. It’s a five-thousand-year-old artifact. What would they have to gain by destroying it? In fact, I feel as though the grand duke may even have some insight as to what the Door does.”

Central’s words silenced Sagitta fairly quickly. She was right, though. Doc Babylon and I had a spell called **[Analyze]**, which allowed us to fundamentally understand how stuff worked. I probably wouldn’t be able to wrap my head around something so complex, but I had a feeling Babylon would know what was up.

“Please, follow me. The Door is at the very top of the temple.” We began ascending the spiral staircase upward.

I was curious about this Door. It was said to be something that would guide them to a new world, but I was curious to see if it was related to how the world’s barrier was repaired. I had no idea what it could be...

We finally arrived at the top floor of the temple, it was an open-air atrium with no roof. It was raining outside, but it seemed that there was a barrier preventing any of it from hitting us.

Several unusual geometric formations and shapes were scrawled

into the ground, creating a massive magical circle that I didn't recognize at all. The lines and formations all converged on one point in the middle of the atrium, that's where the Door was.

It certainly looked somewhat like a Door, but it was clearly not a standard one. More specifically, it more resembled a marble arch, except not made of marble. It kind of reminded me of a tinier version of the Arc de Triomphe in France. It was more person-sized. Above the arch was a what shockingly resembled a wattmeter, and elsewhere on the arch was a display unit that resembled a tachometer.

Is it made of metal? It's so majestic that I have a hard time believing it's ancient... I guess it could have a protective enchantment like the rest of this place, though.

"May I touch it?"

"By all means." I got permission from Mentor Central, then reached out to the object. It was cold to the touch, confirming my suspicions of its metallic composition. I could also feel the unusual streams of magical energy flowing through it as well.

"It looks extremely sturdy, it does..."

"Yeah... But it's not mithril or orichalcum. I have no idea what kind of metal this is." I shrugged towards Yae, who had also taken it upon herself to touch the weird arch. I tapped it a bit with my knuckles. *That's metal, alright.*

"Hmhm... It's made out of chronium. I've never seen such a pure sample, though..." Doc Babylon hopped down from Kohaku and gave it a few caresses. As she spoke, Mentor Central's eyes went wide.

"What an incredibly discerning eye... Grand Duke, just who is that girl?" Her response was natural, given that Babylon looked like a literal ten-year-old in an oversized coat.

"Her name is Doctor Regina Babylon. She's Brunhild's primary magitechnician. Would you allow her to analyze the Gate with her Null magic? She'll likely learn something new about it."

"Oh?! A-Ah... Y-Yes, of course!" She was probably more surprised about such a small looking girl being a foremost researcher than anything else. The four representatives behind her were just as bewildered, and they all trained their eyes on Babylon as she began to do her thing.

She completely ignored their watchful eyes and laid both hands upon the Door. Her own eyes closed as she focused her magical power.

"[Analyze]." She began trying to process the information in her head. Or at least, that's what I assumed she was doing from all the muttering and mumbling that was now going on.

I tried to use [Analyze] as well, but it took only a few seconds for me to give up trying to wrap my head around what I was seeing. I

understood a few things, like how it was built and what it was made of, but that was about the extent. Ultimately my knowledge wasn't specialized enough. I couldn't make good use of the information. It was like having a regular old person see the schematics for an electrical appliance.

"I certainly don't recognize the magical formulas here. It goes without saying that it's an incredible device, however. From what I understand here, it functions similarly to a **[Gate]**, in that it functions as a space-time transfer device... I'm somewhat confused by the lack of co-ordinates, though. Or rather, I simply can't sense the coordinates for the destination at all. The amount of magical power required to turn it on is also obscene, which effectively means..."

I stopped listening to the rambling doctor and turned to ask Mentor Central a question.

"Alerius Palerius left this behind, right?"

"That is correct. My ancestor used this island as his personal testing grounds. This very temple was built solely to house the Door inside of it, but unfortunately, Palerius left the island before he could finish it. His four disciples took over operations afterward, but even they were unable to complete—"

"No, it's already complete. Pretty sure, actually." Doctor Babylon completely butted in on Central's talking, wiping the sweat from her own brow as she finally took her hand off the door.

"We won't know exactly where it goes unless we start it up, but it has definitely been completed. The formula allowing magic to channel into it is done and everything."

"...Then why won't it trigger? We've tried for years, generations, to pour magic into it."

"Ain't that obvious? The magic your people provided wasn't enough."

...Seriously? It wasn't enough? Are you telling me this door needs more magic than generations upon generations of people? It's such a small door, though! Wait, don't tell me the door is a metaphor for the whole island or something, and you actually need to charge up a whole lot more. Is the door just a fake?! An illusion?! Was the real door the friends we made along the way?

"...How can that possibly be? I am a person with incredible magical power compared to the standard individual, and even mine isn't enough to make this Door do a thing." Central frowned as she probed the Doc for answers.

"You're not wrong, you do have a hell of a lot of magic energy going on. Still, your magic is around equivalent to two or three people, I'd wager. It's not enough. If I wanted to lowball estimate it, I think this door needs the magic of a hundred-thousand people to turn

on.”

“Wh—?!”

“Also, that magic would turn the door on for about a split second. There’s no way any normal person could activate it. It would probably take about three-hundred years for a regular person to activate it, provided they exhausted their magic into it every single day.” That was absolutely absurd, this thing had no energy efficiency at all!

Mentor Central and the four representatives were completely taken aback.

Yae, on the other hand, just kind of tilted her head in confusion. She couldn’t quite grasp the scale we were talking about, but she couldn’t use magic to begin with anyways.

“It seems like Palerius’ disciples tried to etch in a magical efficiency formula that would’ve reduced the amount of power needed... but they failed to finish it in time. It would’ve only taken about a hundredth of the time, had they completed that part.”

“Then, you mean to say if that formula is completed, we could open the door in a mere three years?”

“Yeah, that sounds about reasonable.”

Three years... That sounds more reasonable, I guess. I wonder if using three people would make it go faster, like reduce it to one year... Or maybe they could use thirty-six people to have it done in a month!

My idea was shot down. Apparently using magic from multiple people just wouldn’t cut it. That was a shame.

Every human had a different magical wavelength going on... It would be easier to think about it in terms of colors. A canvas painted over a long period of time with the same color would end up looking completely different to a canvas that had a bunch of colors splashed all over it for a short period of time. When it came to devices that required concentrated magic, it was better to have one person take care of it.

“So it’s incomplete, then...”

“Well, it’s still usable. Touya should be able to turn it on right now.”

“Ahaha... We’re really resorting to using me, Doc?”

She flashed a grin in my general direction. I sighed.

“Sorry, I understand that the Grand Duke possesses a great amount of magical energy... It must take a vast amount to bring those giant warriors over, but... how much does he have, exactly?”

“I’m not actually sure. My magical pool runs pretty deep. I have hundreds of summoned creatures active right now and none of them have put much of a dent in it.”

“Wh—?!” Even after summoning Kohaku and the other Heavenly Beasts, and their related creatures, I hadn’t felt like it had gone down

much at all. In fact, after my divinity came out, it felt like I had more magic to play with. I was in a league of my own these days, though it felt a little late to say it.

"I believe I may be able to activate this Door, but... I'll ask you for permission. Would you let me try?"

"Y-Yes, of course. If it would help us understand exactly what Alerius Palerius was preparing all those years ago, then I'd gladly..." Mentor Central gave me permission, so I shrugged and began preparing to turn it on.

Based on how it worked, it seemed to work pretty similarly to my portals. The only issue was I had no idea of the destination.

I didn't want this thing opening up under the sea or anything... That would be a major pain in the ass.

"I am here to guard you, Touya-dono. I cannot allow you to come to danger, I cannot."

"It's me we're talking about, Yae. If it's a bad place, I'll just warp right back. If it's not too bad, I'll take care of any trouble there." Yae didn't want to let me go, but I persuaded her otherwise. I didn't want to expose her to any potential dangers on the other side, after all. After that, I set up a protective barrier around the Door. That was a preventative measure in case it led somewhere under the ocean. The barrier would block the flow. Then all I'd need to do is close the Door.

"Alright, let me try this..." I had everyone step back, and then I laid my hands on the Door. My magic began to flow into it, and the mechanisms on the door all began to spring to life. The tachometer started to stir as well. It was as I'd suspected, the meters were to measure the magic channeled into the object. The design had a bit of a retro-chic feel in that regard...

I sped up the transfer rate, and it began to whirl and hum tremendously. The tachometer's reading began to rise rapidly as well. The magical formation on the ground beneath the Door also began to light up.

"Oh, wow!"

"It's doing it!" Everyone around me seemed surprised by what was happening. I was surprised as well, but for an entirely different reason. Despite the vast quantities of magic I'd channeled into it, it still wasn't finished. It just kept absorbing. Gradually the entire temple was enveloped in a faint glow of light. The tachometer had hit around eighty percent on its meter.

The space between the arch began to contort and light up. It would only take a little more for the portal to appear. I stepped up my game, pouring even more magic into it.

The tachometer finally reached a full hundred percent. I looked through the arch to see trees and an open sky. The other side didn't

look dangerous, which was a relief.

“Seems like it worked...” I didn’t want the Door to close because my connection to it was severed, so I walked through the frame with my hand still on it.

“Alright, see you guys soon.” I smiled to the others, and then went on through the Door.

This is weird...

The feeling was unusual. It was almost like I was walking through warm molasses, or my entire body was gently pressing itself into yielding rubber.

I didn’t really like the feeling, so I stepped all the way through the Door in one go.

In a flash, I felt the ground beneath my feet. I looked up to see a woodland area.

I turned to look behind me, but there was nothing there. Just as I’d expected, the trip was one-way.

I felt pretty damn exhausted, which was only natural given how much of my magic had been drained. Fortunately, it was already starting to recover.

Now... lemme get my bearings... Am I in the Sea of Trees...? For some reason, I don't feel like it... Place seems like a regular forest, I guess.

I took out my Smartphone and tried to project the map.

“What the...?”

It refused to open. I wondered if this area had a barrier around it, or if this was Alerius Palerius’ doing. The latter wasn’t likely, since he’d never managed to finish the Door during his lifetime. It was still vexing.

I took out my phone and tried to call Yae, but the call refused to connect. I couldn’t contact Kohaku through telepathic means, either. I took that to mean there was some kind of interference barrier blocking me.

My magic was still fine, though. I invoked a little wind as a test and it worked fine. I wondered what that meant. As I pondered to myself, I suddenly heard screaming from the forest. It was accompanied by the sound of falling trees.

What’s going on here?! I ran through the forest until I finally came out on what looked like a large road. There were trees in the area, but they’d all been pulled out at the roots. I was extremely confused.

It was at that moment that I saw a two-headed dinosaur attacking a metallic passenger carriage.

“What...?!” The tyrannosaur-like creature was clearly a species of magical beast that I didn’t recognize at all. Or perhaps a Dragon... I frowned a bit at that.

But then I noticed something that confused me even more than

the monster.

To be blunt, the metal carriage... wasn't exactly a conventional kind of carriage you might find being pulled by horses or anything like that.

Curiously it was more like... a crab? The carriage itself had metal legs jutting from its left and right sides, giving it a crab-like appearance. It didn't have any pincers, though.

Simply looking at it was freaking me out a little, in all honesty. I'd never seen anything quite like it.

It wasn't exactly a small carriage, either. It was long enough to be called a bus... That was why I settled on calling it a Crab Bus. Or maybe Crab Wagon would have been apter. It definitely looked like an old-style mechanical device, it had rivets and round screws visible here and there, too... Kind of steampunk, even.

"Is it an artifact, or something?" I muttered quietly in confusion as the two-headed Dragon body-slammed the crab carriage. I heard several screams from within as it made impact. I didn't have time to sit around and postulate. If I sat by and watched the whole thing, then the people inside would be in a heap of trouble.

"Come forth, Fire! Purgatorial Pillar: [Inferno Fire]!" I produced a magical flaming spiral, and it enveloped the twin-headed beast. It recoiled in pain as I activated **[Storage]** to produce Blade Mode Brunhild, which I promptly used to lop its head off.

It fell to the ground with a crash, and that was that.

The mechanized crab steadied itself, and several people peeked out of the carriage. They were safe, that was a relief.

One of the people, a man, came over to me with a broad smile on his face. Then, he began talking.

「.s u d e v a s y l l a e r u o Y .l a p ,t a h t r o f s k n a h T」

"...Excuse me?" That was bad. I had no idea what he was saying. I wondered if the common tongue I spoke didn't exist in this place.

"Do you not speak common?"

「.....e r o f e b e g a u g n a l t a h t d r a e h r e v e n e v 'I ? s p a h r e p , r e n g i e r o f a u o y e r A ? h u H」

That was futile. The merchant, a mustachioed older gentleman, let out a confused sigh. Neither of us was getting through to the other.

There was nothing else for it, he couldn't understand my words, so I had to use other methods.

I began to make a series of gestures to communicate my lack of hostility. I extended my hand out to him, and he took it. We found ourselves in the throes of a firm handshake. I was immensely relieved. Wherever I was, they knew what handshakes were. After all, I needed

to touch his hand for my particular spell to take effect.

“**[Translation]**.”

My magic flowed from my body and into his, after a brief moment, it flowed back.

“How’s that, understand me?”

“Ahhh, you speak Allentese, wonderful. I was a little confused, as I thought you’d hit your head or something...” The spell I had just cast was a handy little number. It would melt into the target’s memories, absorb all necessary information on a language, and then pull it back to the caster.

The language I had just learned was called Allentese. I’d never heard of it.

“My name’s Pedro Sancho, I’m a traveling trader. I’m indebted to you, sonny.”

“Please, don’t worry about that. Oh, right. My name is Mochizuki Touya.”

“Towya, huh? Pretty weird name... Where do you come from?” If I wanted to be honest, I’d tell him Earth, but obviously, that wasn’t an option here.

“I was born in Eashen, but I live in Brunhild right now.”

“Eashen? Brunhild? Never heard of them. They frontier villages or something?”

Wait... he hasn’t heard of either of those places? Just where the hell have I wound up...? I sighed quietly, then asked Mr. Sancho a question.

“Uh... This may sound a little weird, but where are we right now? I think I’ve gotten a bit lost.”

“This is a main road that spans east from Allen, the capital. We’re about a day out by carriage.”

“Allen...? It’s a capital? What country is it part of?”

“Which...? Come now, lad. It’s Allen, so obviously it’s the capital of the Allent Theocracy. Here, hold on a sec.” Mr. Sancho went back to his carriage and came back. Then, he passed a small paper into my hands.

“Here’s a map. See right here? The Allent Theocracy. And here’s the capital city, Allen.”

“...What in the world...” I looked at the map with frantic, confused eyes. It was absolutely the map of the world that I knew. It wasn’t all that different from the map I could pull up on my smartphone. There was just one key difference.

On a standard map, Eashen would be located to the far east. But on this map, it was to the far west. Not only that, but it was upside down.

Incredibly enough... The world map I was looking at was... reversed. Flipped, as if held up in front of a mirror.



What could this mean...? I guess that Door wasn't an ordinary portal... Don't tell me I've been sent to another world! It wasn't unreasonable to suppose that Alerius Palerius could've done something like that. Then again, it was only thanks to my near-infinite magic that it actually worked... This was still concerning, though.

"Tohya? You okay?" Mr. Sancho turned to me, wondering why I'd gone silent.

"Ah, yeah. I'm fine. It's just that I landed a little further from home than I expected..."

"Landed? Oh, tell me, Tohya. Did you use transportation magic or something?"

"Mhm... I did..." I gave a rather curt reply to the concerned merchant. It seemed that this world had magic too, which was a relief.

He offered to take me to the capital, but I politely declined his offer. I needed time to process what was going on. Plus I could use magic to get around faster.

He told me to check out his store if I ever visited the capital, and went on his way in the mysterious crab carriage.

I wondered what to do...

"[Gate]." I tried opening a portal, but it refused to connect.

...What. H-How am I gonna get home? This is bad, this is really bad... They're gonna start panicking on the other side if they can't find me...

I began freaking out a little, but then my phone suddenly started to ring. The caller was none other than God Almighty.

A message from above! Literally!

"H-Hello?!"

"Ah, it connected. Hello there, Touya?"

"Hey! I'm a little panicked right now, but I'm okay... What's up?"

"Ahahaha... I never expected you to go to yet another world on your own. But at least you kept your smartphone. Please hold, I will send someone to come and get you."

Get me? Before I could even process what was going on, a great flash of light erupted out of thin air. Then, a person stepped from the blinding blitz.

"Goodness me... You made us worry, you know?"

"Karen..." It was the god of love, my sister Karen. She stood there pouting, hands on her hips.

"It was awful over there, you know?! Little Kohaku suddenly faded into thin air! Nobody could locate you, you weren't picking up your phone! We thought you could have been hurt! Yae called me on the phone while crying!"

Yikes... I guess my magic got cut off from all my summoned beasts.

Obviously, that would've scared everyone, too.

"Not I nor the other gods in Brunhild could sense you, you know? That's why we contacted God Almighty."

"I'm sorry for the trouble..." Apparently, it had been ten hours since I entered the Door, but it felt to me like it had been less than an hour.

Given that Kohaku had probably evaporated in front of Yae, it made complete sense that she'd be distressed. She probably thought that I was in trouble.

"So, how do I get back?"

"We have an ability called Spatial Translocation, you know? But that would be too much of a toll on you... Let's head back to the realm of the gods and take it from there." It sounded a little weird that going to the divine realm took less effort than hopping to my world, but I didn't question it.

That being said, when you took the world barriers into account it probably was easier for a divine entity to enter a space made only for the divine. Nobody else would be able to go there, after all.

I opened up a [Gate] and stepped through it. I came out right in front of God Almighty.

"Man, I really am sorry about this..."

"Not at all, my lad. This kind of thing happens now and then."

Hm... I guess? Apparently, it wasn't too rare across the countless worlds to have people slip through now and then. Apparently, some Gods slipped through to various worlds now and then just to hide around.

"I would love to talk, but I think you should get home quickly. Your family will be quite worried."

"You're right. Thanks a lot." I bowed in apology to god, then opened up a [Gate] again. *Come to think of it... Didn't it get mentioned once that I could open a portal to get back home...? Guess I can't, after all.* Shrugging, I appeared with Karen in the temple on Palerius Island.

I saw Yae bowing deeply in front of the Door, and Doc Babylon was frantically examining it. The representatives of the island were nervously watching them from afar.

"I'm home."

"T-Touya-dono?! It is you, it is!" Yae scrambled to her feet, yelled with joy, and began squeezing me tight.

Oof... That was almost Sue-tier...

"I-I was so worried about you, I was... K-Kohaku vanished, she did. And then the call did not connect! I-I thought, sniff... I thought you had returned to your old woorld, I did... Waaaaaah!"



I'm sorry I worried you... I gently brushed Yae's hair with my hand. She was sniffing and crying.

"Hey now... There's no way I'd abandon you... Hey, would I?"

"Sniff... Y-You're right..."

"Hey, lovebirds. Sorry to break up a nice thing, but she wasn't the only one who was concerned." Doctor Babylon was glaring at me, fire in her eyes.

"My bad. Sorry for the trouble."

"...That apology felt a little different to the one you were giving Yae just now. Did you really have to speak so monotone? Well, whatever. What kind of place did the Door take you to?"

"Oh, right..." Mentor started to approach from the stairs. I had no idea what to tell them.

Hmm... What should I say...

"Another world...? The Door truly led to such a place?"

Doctor Babylon went wide-eyed and shocked, so did Central and the four representatives.

Ultimately, I decided to tell them the truth. It didn't matter that much, since there was nobody but me who could activate it. Whether or not they believed me was a different matter, though.

"I guess you could call it a Reverse World. It's similar to this world, but has a few differences." I'd taken a photo of Mr. Sancho's map with my smartphone. I then used **[Drawing]** to create a printout.

"So this is what Alerius Palerius meant when he was referring to the new world..." Dyent muttered quietly to himself. He was likely correct. Though, more accurately, it was Alerius' disciples who attempted to use the Door to reach a new world and escape the Phrase.

But none of them, not even all of them combined, were as talented as the original sage. They were unable to finish it, and that was why their descendants were trapped on the island.

"So now you guys have even more options. You could stay on the island and continue your struggle against the Behemoths. You could remove the barrier and join with the outside world... You could mix up both, and send out those who would like to leave while keeping closed off from the world. Or, as a final option, you could pass through the Door to the new world instead." The room went completely silent. I continued talking.

"Let me make one thing clear, though. If you go to the new world, you can't come back. I was lucky to return, but that was a one-off. You won't get the same chance. The people on the other side don't speak the same language, and I don't know anything about their geopolitical

affairs. If you guys come to a decision, I'd like to hear it soon enough."

It was a world with weird creatures in the wilderness, so it wasn't exactly safe like modern-day Japan or anything. That being said, it was probably safer than this world. There wasn't a Phrase threat to contend with over there, at least.

"We can't make a decision right now... May we consider it over the next few days?"

"Alright, that's fine. We aren't in a rush or anything, just take care to consider all the factors."

I nodded toward Mentor Central after I said that. Their choice would have wide-reaching ramifications, so I understood why they needed time. A proper discussion was only natural.

I decided that the best thing I could do for the time being was go home. I was totally pooped.



I returned to Brunhild, only to be accosted by everyone. I understood they were scared, but they didn't need to squeeze so tightly...

I summoned Kohaku and the other beasts and apologized for having them suddenly vanish. They were pretty shocked by what had happened.

I also summoned Snow, the little rodent that belonged to Lop and his friends.

"Sorry about this... Go back to your buddies, okay?" I sent Snow back with a little apology note, and he quickly ran off into the darkness.

Hrmph... I don't want this to happen again, so... maybe I should prepare some kind of reserve tank with my magic in it? If I can make some kind of mana battery that stores my magic, it should work as a reserve if I ever go out of range again...

"So that Door took you to another world...? Given the Phrase, and your own story about where you come from, I understand, but... it's still strange..." Yumina, clad in white pajamas, rolled around on my bed as she muttered.

It wasn't just her, either. All my other fiancées had invaded my room and were making my bed their new nest. They said they wanted to punish me for making them scared, so they'd all be sleeping with me... Not in that way, of course. It wasn't time.

The bed was a specially-made item for such situations like this, so it was extra big. Big enough for ten people to sit on it, at least. Even with the addition of the stuffed bear, there was plenty of space left.

To be honest, the bed was way too big, in my opinion. That was why I usually slept on a smaller bed by its side, most nights.

“Hey Touya, how was it on the other side?” Sue, wearing her own cute little yellow pajama ensemble, clung to my back, and asked a question. She was pretty stressed about the ordeal, so she was allowed to stay over tonight.

“Mmm... I didn’t stay very long. I didn’t see much. I wanted to get home as soon as possible because I knew you’d all be worried.”

“You were right, we were all worried.”

“Extremely worried...” Linze and Sakura stared a hole into me with their eyes. I’d already apologized a ton, so I wished they wouldn’t blame me so much.

“When Kohaku disappeared, I felt as though my heart was going to give out, I did.”

“Me too! I didn’t know what to do when Yae called saying you were gone.”

“We’re just glad to have you home safe.”

Yae, Elze, and Hilde all expressed their fears as well. It wasn’t like I was responsible, though...

“I’m confused, Touya... You managed to return to our world safely, but... Didn’t you say you couldn’t cast [Gate] at all?”

“Ah... Well, Lu, uhm... about that...”

“...What are you hiding from us?”

I was hesitant to answer Lu’s question, and Leen had zeroed in almost immediately.

Hrmm... Should I seriously tell them? I mean... It’s not like I’m not allowed to tell them, and frankly not telling them might just cause more trouble.

I decided to tell them my biggest secret. All about how I came to this world, all about god, and all about what I was going to become. They thought I was joking at first, but gradually their expressions softened as I continued talking. They sighed slightly and looked at me with puzzled expressions on their faces.

“I don’t even know where to begin here...” Elze looked shocked.

“So you’re telling me that... not only are you from another world, Darling... but you’re also a god? Why do you never cease to surprise me...?”

“This... honestly explains quite a lot...” Lu nodded to Leen, accepting my story entirely. I was a little surprised by how readily they were accepting it.

“Then, does that mean your sisters are...”

“Gods, yes. They’re not allowed to use their divinity down here, but they are from the divine pantheon.”

“...This country really is rather crazy, isn’t it? I wonder if we’ll ever be defeated at this rate...” Leen let out yet another sigh.

“Well, it doesn’t matter what Touya is. He’s still our husband at

the end of the day!” Yumina put it bluntly, and the rest of the girls nodded in agreement. I was pretty amazed by my fiancées. They had a lot of guts to just accept it like that.

I was embarrassed, even though it was nice to be accepted, so I curled up into my bed and tried to sleep.

Yumina and the others were giggling amongst themselves, but I pretended not to hear. Sleepytime was calling.

I was going to visit the gods after I woke up, to express my gratitude to them for rescuing me. I wondered what gift would be best to bring...

According to Karen, I’d be able to use the Spatial Translocation ability if I focused my divinity, but I couldn’t do it just yet. Using it would allow me to jump to other worlds, apparently. Still, I wanted to get some kind of magic tank or reserve before even making another attempt.

I began to ponder those things as sleep claimed me, and the darkness set in across the corners of my vision.



Chapter II: The Wicked Godbeast

The next day, I visited God Almighty. I brought along a few cakes that Crea had made, along with some of Lu's homemade meals.

"Sorry for the trouble again..."

"I told you it was no bother, do not worry yourself. All I did was make a phone call and look around for you a little. However, I will accept your gifts with gratitude." He smiled a little as he took the meals and put them in a small, compact refrigerator. I wouldn't have been surprised to learn that the fridge he was using was some kind of sacred treasure...

"Traveling to other worlds is not all that unusual in the grand scheme of things. There are those in other worlds who can even summon people from across space and time. Plus, there are even people who are born with the ability to move across worlds."

The whole being summoned to another world thing kind of sounds like a trashy light novel premise... Still, I guess that means there are other people like Ende out there too.

"By the way, that world I went to... Do you know anything about it?"

"That one? Well, to put it in simple terms, it exists adjacent to the world you currently reside in. Because of that, it has a lot of features that make it similar to your current world. That being said, it is not a situation where there are mirrored versions of people you know or anything."

So I guess the resemblance only goes so far as it having a similarly shaped world map, having monsters roam around, and magic as well... I'm glad it isn't some weird inverse world where there's a female version of me running around or anything.

"That world was also ravaged by a great war, once."

"Wait, really? Was it the Phrase?"

"It was not. It was just a simple world war. Their technology escalated to the point where it was inevitable. Their civilization was ruined. That happens to many worlds, actually."

Even back home we had myths and legends like Noah's Ark, and Ragnarok. A lot of worlds probably died and then were reborn from the ashes.

"Is it forbidden for me or anyone else to visit that world again?"

“Hm? Not at all. I do not see a reason to prevent you from investigating that world further. There might have been an issue if you had taken some of those crystal pests, but you have taken care of that for now. There is no issue with it, it is only one of many worlds in the end.”

So going back to the Reverse World is fine? Guess I can tell the islanders if they decide to make that choice.

“...By the way, my sister told me I could use something called Spatial Translocation. Can I use that ability to go to worlds beyond that adjacent one?”

“Spatial Translocation, you say... Ordinarily, you cannot use regular teleportation magic to go between worlds. This is because of the world boundary that wraps each world, which is near impossible to penetrate.”

According to god, it was most unusual that I could use **[Gate]** to access the divine realm to begin with. He was pretty curious about how I'd managed to do it in the first place, but wanted to play it cool the first time. Or something like that... Still, the fact that the god of worlds didn't even notice was a little worrying... If their security was so lax, no wonder that servile god got out.

But maybe that was another god's jurisdiction, and it was he who needed to pull up the slack.

“Still, Spatial Translocation is different to typical transportation or teleportation magic. It is a divine technique that allows one to bypass the boundary.”

“In that case... couldn't I use it to return to my former world?”

“It is possible, yes. But I would like it if you did not entertain that train of thought. You have already died in that world, after all. It would be most troubling if you were to suddenly appear, resurrected.

That made sense, I didn't really want to cause mass panic by coming back from the dead. Returning to my old world would just cause a bunch of trouble for the people who lived there.

Still, I wondered if there wasn't some way I could get a look at my old world again... Through people's dreams, perhaps...

“By the time you can use Spatial Translocation, you would be a fully-fledged god. I have told you that I think it would be best if you did not join our ranks so quickly. It will happen eventually, no matter what, so I think you should enjoy the leeway of your current situation for a little while longer.”

He was right. I currently had the powers of the divine, but I wasn't limited by their rules. There were things that only I could do due to my status as a demi-god. It was probably better to stay in my current grey area for a little longer.

If I could come and go from that world freely, then perhaps the

doc would be able to figure something out. She had already used **[Analyze]** on the portal's structure, so I wondered if she'd be able to build another Door in Brunhild using the workshop.

I pondered quietly as I enjoyed a nice cup of tea with God.



"A tank of reserve magic...? It should be possible, I suppose. I'll make the tank while I build the Dimension Disruptor. They'll share functions, after all, given they're both meant to store vast amounts of magic."

"The Dimension what now? Are you seriously building another Door here?"

"Isn't that obvious? I don't want to have to admit to borrowing the old man's design, but it has some interesting applications."

According to Doc Babylon, the new doorway... or Dimensional Disruptor... would be ready in a mere three days. That was absurdly fast, even for the workshop. Then again, all the hard work in regards to getting it to work was actually done. She was just duplicating it based on existing results.

I shrugged and decided to entrust her with it. I had my own matters to deal with, after all. Specifically, the problems contained in the report on the nearby coffee table.

The Soul Eater was back at it again. Or, to be more specific, Crystal Skeletons had been spotted again. This time it was in Refreeze, in a port city.

It was a commercial city which had various traders coming and going at all hours of the day. Naturally, there were upstanding merchants and unscrupulous ones as well. But the corruption outweighed fairness in this case, from what I was told. It was a city dominated by the corrupt merchants and their money-makes-right philosophy.

I couldn't exactly use that to say that Refreeze's government was wrong, however. Greed was a driving force, an energy that could lead one to prosper. It just so happened that the force driving the prosperity was steeped in negativity enough to attract something terrible.

It felt more like the Soul Eater was simply being drawn close by negative emotions at large. It wouldn't necessarily appear in the places where those feelings were concentrated, it simply appeared in places nearby.

It seemed to be moving at random. I could only hope that future attack sites would get in contact with us before it was too late.

"The lack of Phrase attacks lately is a little unsettling..."

"There's nothing we can do for now."

“I just wish we could find that thing before it’s too late...” Yumina and Lu sighed quietly as they expressed their concerns.

Kousaka took care of most domestic issues, but there were also areas where some of my fiancées could chip in with their advice.

Yumina and Lu were royalty, so they helped out with foreign diplomacy and domestic issues now and then. Still, I didn’t want to overwork them or anything.

Everyone else was at the seaside today, Karen had invited them over. I wanted to go too, but I had this stuff to attend to. If I skipped it, I’d regret it later when more harm came to innocent people.

“Where will it appear next...?”

“Not Regulus, I hope... Ah, I mean... I hope it doesn’t appear anywhere! S-Sorry, I don’t want you to think I was prioritizing my birthplace...”

“It’s okay. Regulus is still recovering its military since the coup. It’d be bad if they were hit now.” As I pondered, my smartphone suddenly started vibrating. It was Relisha. I wondered if something was going on with the guild.

“Sup, Relisha?”

“Your Highness! The creature, the soul-devouring one! It’s appeared in Yulong! It’s in Changyung, a southern city!”

“What?!”

Speak of the damn devil. Apparently, individuals from the Roadmare guild branch had gone to Changyung in order to establish a new guild. Their timing was a blessing and a curse, because of the horrors they discovered there.

I couldn’t afford to let it go. I opened up my map and checked where Changyung was on the map.

“It’s there... Alright, I’ll be back!”

“I’ll come with you!”

“Me too!” I opened up a portal to head out, but Yumina and Lu called and asked to join me.

In all honesty, I was hesitant to take them to such a horrible and dangerous place, but they’d also trained under my sister. I couldn’t shelter them or take them lightly.

It could become too difficult for one person alone. It was possible that the tables could be turned on me. It was possible that I’d have to sacrifice people, or something could go wrong... But...

“It’s okay. We’ll listen to whatever you say, and we won’t overdo it.”

“...Fine, then. I’ll be counting on you guys.”

Yumina smiled softly. It seemed she’d noticed my hesitation. She could see right through me...

“Kohaku! Luli!” I channeled my magic and called two of my

summons toward me.

It was late, so it seemed like Kohaku had been sleeping. Luli, on the other hand, seemed to be leisurely tossing grapes into her mouth straight from the vine. Good grief...

"I'm going to face the Wicked God. Kohaku, you protect Yumina. Luli, you protect Lu. Got it?"

"Y-Yep! Of course, at once!"

"Mmm... Mhm...!" Kohaku flailed around in a half-asleep stupor, while Luli answered with a mouth full of grapes. It was all good.

I couldn't catch either of my sisters on the phone, for whatever reason... They were probably swimming and hadn't taken their phones to prevent damage. It was a shame, but unavoidable. I sent them a text instead.

"Alright, let's go!"

"Yes!"

"Okay!"

We went through the **[Gate]** and came out in the ruins of Yulong's former capital. The place was as ruined as ever. If anything, it looked worse than the last time. Now all that was left was to use **[Fly]** and whoosh off to Changyung.

"...Will you two be okay flying?"

"Ah, yes. I-It's a little scary but I'm sure we can do it. Right, Lu?"

"O-Of course! Let's just fly as quick as we can!"

They were both scared by how unstable it was when I used **[Levitation]** on them whenever I flew around. I didn't have much time, though. So they'd have to bear with it.

I grabbed them both tightly and pulled their bodies close against mine, one arm around each of their backs.

"T-Touya?!"

"A-Ah, Touya?!"

"Hold on tight you two. We'll be there in a flash."

I used **[Levitation]** to pick up Kohaku and Luli. Luli was a little annoyed because she had her own wings, but I didn't care. I could fly faster than her at this point, and time was of the essence.

I launched into the air and zoomed toward my destination. I could fly at full speed and not feel any wind resistance thanks to the protective barriers I'd erected. Despite that, the two girls fearfully clung to my side.

It would take only five minutes to reach Changyung at that speed.

My eyes were immediately drawn to the signs of death and carnage on the street, rather than the beautiful architecture and red rooftops.

We landed on the ground and found corpses here and there. They grew little crystals from their bodies, and their faces were all

contorted in agony.

“How awful...”

“Terrible...!” Yumina and Lu looked on at the disaster with horror on their faces.

I used my divinity to check the bodies, and their souls were gone. There was no doubt. The Soul Eater was here.

“Gyaaaaaugh?!” A horrific shriek resonated through the streets. It wasn’t far from me. It felt like agony given audible form.

“Let’s go!”

Kohaku turned into her full tiger form, and Luli converted into a size more suitable for urban navigation.

Yumina sat on Kohaku’s back, and Lu straddled Luli. Kohaku began walking around the area, and Luli flapped her wings.

We turned the corner and came to the source of the sound. What we found was an enormous monster ripping a man’s throat out.

It had a golden mane and what looked like an unrealistically hard coat of fur, its radiance somewhat muddled. It resembled a dog or a large wolf, but aspects of it were also similar to a lion. An unsettling mist emanated from the creature. It was like divinity, but somehow dirtier.

“Is that the wicked god?”

It was four meters tall. When it noticed my presence, it turned two glimmering red eyes in my direction. Its dark gold mane bristled with a malignant force, only intensifying the danger I could feel in the atmosphere.

This... wicked godbeast... dropped the man on the ground before leaping up to a rooftop. The man’s neck wound immediately sealed itself shut as his body shriveled and dried. A crystal flower then bloomed right out of his neck.

“This is it...”

The beast wasted no time and jumped straight from the rooftop toward me. I pulled Brunhild out of **[Storage]** and switched it to Blade Mode, then jumped toward it myself. I struck it as we passed each other. But... with a clang, a loud, metallic noise reverberated through the air as I touched it.

“It’s that tough?!” My arm tensed up and I felt the impact ring through my body. My attack did nothing at all. I looked down at Brunhild in awe and found that the phrasium blade actually had a chip in it.

That’s impossible!

The beast turned around and charged toward me.

Gah!

“Come forth, Earth! Barrier of the Mother Soil: **[Earthwall]** !”

“Whoa!”

The ground between me and the godbeast rose up, causing the creature to smack its face into hardened soil.



“Are you okay, Touya?!”

“Thanks, Yumina!” The godbeast stared at Yumina and Kohaku before making a run toward them, only to be intercepted by Lu, who had Luli spew a rain of fireballs from her mouth.

The creature was staggered by the attack, but not much. It clambered to its feet and jumped back.

Good job!

“Gun Mode!” I switched Brunhild’s form and quickly aimed it at my enemy.

I fired off a few shots at the godbeast and it was suddenly wrapped in a torrent of flames.

I’d loaded it with specialized bullets. More specifically, ones enchanted with **[Fire Storm]**.

The flames quickly dissipated, flowing into the beast’s body. Its lumbering form shimmered as it consumed the magic entirely.

It seemed to have the spell absorbing properties that the Phrase did... It made sense, the muddy-gold color and fur-like coating had thrown me off but it was unmistakably made of the same material the Phrase were made of. I wondered if it was some kind of modified subspecies.

“Grauuugh!” A dark golden aura began to emanate from the creature and gradually concentrated around it, before dispersing in a wide burst.

Wait, that’s... divinity!

“Yumina, Lu! Are you two okay?!”

“W-We’re okay! I don’t know what this thing is, but we’re managing!”

“I-I’m okay, yes!”

Yumina and Lu had divine protection from me and my sisters. If an ordinary person had been hit by that blast of divinity, they’d have been knocked unconscious, or at the very least forced to kneel.

Tsk... Then there was no mistaking it, this monster held something divine inside it... Even if it was caused by that stupid NEET god.

“Try to keep your distance from it!”

For the first time in a long while, I triggered my Apotheosis. My hair grew outward in an instant, and divinity wrapped around my body. In a flash, my platinum aura surrounded the battlefield.

The wicked godbeast stopped in its tracks, and suddenly I heard a dull laugh ring out from somewhere. I recognized that voice!

“Kukuku... I know this divinity... It’s you, isn’t it, boy?”

A muddy-gold swirl in space appeared beside the godbeast, and it gradually morphed into the form of a skinny old man. I was wondering when he’d show up.

“You sure have a lot of free time, but I guess that’s natural for a NEET god.”

“What a rude mouth you have... Still, thank you for coming. I’m sure with a soul like yours in its belly, my little pet here will evolve far faster.”

“So you created this wicked godbeast? You’d even go so far as to use aspects of the Phrase in its design?!”

It was definitely at least as hard as the crystal monsters. This guy was a real pain in the ass, and I wanted him done with already. He’d gone too far. This monster devoured souls and slowly empowered itself. That was just plain wrong. No god should ever do that in a mortal realm... Though, this man was no god to me.

“That’s all thanks to my benefactor... Don’t you worry about that. It was all thanks to them that I managed to create such a magnificent wicked god. Now we won’t have any trouble ravaging this world together.”

“...Excuse me?”

“Oh, you don’t know? Any world destroyed by a wicked god no longer falls under the god of worlds’ jurisdiction. He’d no longer observe or manage it, understand? I intend to completely wipe out everything in this stupid little world, and then I will ascend as its new god, unimpeded by stupid superiors! Kuhuhuhu... Nice plan, right?”

What, his plan is to make God Almighty forsake this world entirely and then rule over it? Is this guy an idiot? Does he really think he can do that?

Still, he had a point. Wicked gods were things that were born in the mortal realm. That meant gods were prohibited from interfering in their ascension. That’s why heroes or chosen ones in the stories were granted sacred treasures to deal with them...

If those heroes fell, then the world would end up forsaken. That made sense enough. Then the world would be abandoned by the gods and slowly meet its demise. So ultimately, the NEET god’s plan was to become the new ruler of this world once it was forsaken... He was truly wretched.

“Now I understand why you’ve been a servile god for so long. You’re pathetic.”

“Silence, cretin! How dare you speak so highly when you aren’t even a real god! You aren’t even a servile god... Tsk! You’ll become fodder for my pet, and together we will ruin this place!”

The godbeast, on its master’s call, opened its maw and spewed forth several blasts of black flame.

“Gah!” I repelled one of the black blasts with a divinity-clad punch. It wasn’t hot, but the impact shook me down to my wrist.

Holy crap! If I wasn’t using my god-stuff right now, then that would’ve

shattered my arm!

I was tempted to clad Brunhild in divinity and use it to deflect the blasts, but I didn't want to run the risk. If the blasts were enough to shake me during my Apotheosis, then my weapon would probably break entirely. I tried to block another one of the blasts with my bare hands, but just touching it for more than a second hurt like hell! I just deflected it again with my fist. The deflected black blasts landed far away from the town, creating a massive torrent of flames on each impact with the ground. I had serious trouble to deal with here. This godbeast was clearly leagues stronger than the NEET god himself!

"You know, the thing about wicked gods is they eat souls and gradually evolve based on how they live during the gestation period. That Yula fellow did a lot of tinkering with my pet here. It's quite interesting, really. The final result is most impressive. It's evolved to this point in barely any time at all, you know?"

Yula?! Damn it, this bastard really has been spending time with a Dominant Construct!

"Now, if you don't mind I'd like to wrap this up quickly. If the sword broad and the love lady get here, I might actually be in trouble... That's why I need to take care of you right now!"

"Hmph... The feeling's mutual, buddy. **[Power Rise]**, **[Teleport]!**"

I warped right next to the godbeast and drove an empowered fist into its abdomen. Its entire body crumpled like a bent noodle and blasted off.

"GRAUWAUUUGH!"

It flew into the sky and smashed into a tall building, collapsing the structure on impact. It fell to the ground and found itself trapped beneath the freshly-created rubble.

"Wh—?!" The servile god stared, bewildered, as he turned to look at his pet. I used that opportunity to clad Brunhild in divinity and shoot two bullets straight into that pathetic NEET's legs.

"Gauh! Wh-What?! How?! You aren't even a full god! How could you penetrate my divinity?!"

"Does that matter? I have a blessing from the god of worlds himself."

"You what?!" He screamed in pain as he fell to his knees. The wounds in his legs were dribbling a golden mist instead of blood.

"How can this be?! How can you have an aura like that?! You're already on the level of a senior god, but you aren't in the pantheon! That's impossible!"

"Unlike you, I have some humility. Unlike you, I work hard and I don't sully myself with wicked deeds. I also know shame, unlike you."

I would take no joy in taking up a high-ranking position just

because of the body I was born into. I didn't want to inconvenience the other gods, not until I was ready to accept the responsibility of the job.

Now, all I had to do was figure out what to do with this stupid NEET. If I disposed of him here and now, I'd end up doing Karen and Moroha's job for them... Though they'd have probably sensed our divinity at this point and were likely en route.

Suddenly, the debris from the wrecked building rumbled, and the wicked godbeast broke out from beneath it. It growled as if it was waiting for my hesitation, and jumped my way.

It landed between me and the servile god before launching three more black flame barrages at me.

Not again!

I would've been fine to dodge it, but there was a chance of survivors in the city. I didn't want them getting hurt. Not to mention the fact that Yumina and Lu were right behind me.

I had no choice but to punch the blasts away from the city again. This time I made sure to massively bolster my hands with excess divinity, as I didn't want to hurt myself too badly again.

Unfortunately, it didn't work out, and each smack caused me considerable pain in my limbs.

"Ow, damn it! Stupid animal!"

As I winced in pain, I noticed the servile god dragging himself over to the godbeast.

"Kuku... Kuhuhu... I think that's enough for one day! But mark my words, boy... Next time..."

He was planning to escape before my sisters arrived. I couldn't let that happen.

But, before I could make a step forward to stop him, the godbeast slowly turned its head toward the servile god.

What is it doing...?

The godbeast slowly opened its mouth. I stared at it, uncertain of what was happening, but... it moved forward and brought its maw down upon the servile god's throat.

"Ngh... Gh-Ghah! Whah... Wh...y...?!" The servile god's eyes went wide with shock. He stared at the golden godbeast as it began to devour his soul. Even I found myself too shocked to move.

"I... Kh... I see... n-now... Gh... God... damn... Y-Yu...la... You did... gnggh... this?! Ghah...! Bastarrd...!" The servile god slowly began to turn into black sand, starting with his legs. He was being eaten up, along with his divinity. After a short while, he exploded into flashes of muddied light, and only the godbeast remained.

"Did... Did he just eat him? Did... Is he dead?" I stared on in horror as the wicked godbeast released a pulse of divinity from within

its body. The divinity slowly coalesced until it turned into a soft, cotton-like material. It began to snare and wrap itself around the godbeast, almost like a silkworm's cocoon.

The godbeast was slowly but surely obscured by this Divinity-laced cotton until it was entirely cocooned. Gradually, the cocoon rose one meter into the air and began to flicker and pulse with a dirty-gold light.

"...What the hell is this?" It was a cocoon. A massive cocoon. Floating in the air, pulsing and flickering with an ominous light...

I didn't understand what it was, but I recognized that it was no good. I wanted to get rid of it as quickly as possible.

I switched Brunhild to Blade Mode and clad it in divinity. Then, I attempted to cleave the cocoon in half.

However, my effort proved fruitless. Nothing happened. My attack just didn't work. The cocoon deformed slightly, but simply squished back into place like a memory foam pillow.

Tsk...

I thought I could use **[Icebind]** on it in order to immobilize it so I could kill it more easily, but that proved pointless as well.

The moment I prepared the spell, the cocoon began to shimmer and shake, and its very form began to fade away from existence. It was fading, it got to the point where I could partially see through it.

"Wait, crap! Is that the recoil phenomenon that the Phrase are affected by?!"

Big enough creatures that came through the world boundary would eventually be recalled through the recoil effect. It was an automated defense system that made it so those that forced their way through couldn't stay. If a wave came into the beach, it would always have to recede.

I was always thankful that something like that existed, but now it was working against me.

"Entwine thus, Ice! Frozen Curse: [Icebind]!" I hastily recited the incantation in a last-ditch attempt to seize it, but the icy bindings failed to capture the cocoon.

The golden cocoon had already vanished, and the divine aura it was emitting was now gone as well.

"...It got away." I sighed quietly and cut off my Apotheosis.

And, just a moment too late, Karen and Moroha appeared from the sky.

"You're late."

"I'm sorry. Karen was asleep."

"Shush, shush! Don't tell him that!"

...Seriously? That's why? I glared over at Karen, who had the imprint of a towel on her cheek.

Well, it wasn't like either of my sisters would've been able to stop the godbeast from eating the servile god.

Yumina and I explained the situation to my sisters.

"Wait... seriously? A wicked god did something like that...?"

"A mortal existence gaining divinity is nothing new, but this is quite troubling..."

So that confirmed wicked gods were mortal creations and were likely born separately from the actual gods themselves.

Either way, there was no way we could've countered this. A wicked god taking in the powers of an actual god was unprecedented. There was no way a human could stand against it. If this world was forsaken and nobody was left to watch over it, it would end up just like how the servile god wanted it. Ironical, that his death would likely be the fuel toward letting that ideal live.

The wicked god would still be confined to this world, and nothing nor anyone would interfere with it. It would simply stay on the barren world that it ruined until it died. That was how things would work under normal circumstances. Though, these weren't normal circumstances. I was a man who held the power of the gods, but I was not yet a full god. I wasn't held accountable to their rules.

"...So I'm gonna have to kill the godbeast, aren't I?"

"I'm afraid so, bucko. Sorry, you have to do our job now."

"We'll still stay put and support you as best as we can. It's the least we can do, you know?"

That stupid NEET god had ruined everything. I didn't want to have to deal with that kind of crap!

"The cocoon is likely building a new body for the godbeast from the ground up. In your case, Touya, God Almighty rebuilt you in a similar way. But this creature's body will undergo a transformation and it should come out even more powerful than before." That made sense, as the cocoon definitely seemed like something to protect a growing creature. I wanted to destroy it before whatever the hell was inside ended up hatching out.

"Well, that aside we need to see if there any survivors."

"Let me help, then."

"Yes, I'll help too."

"M-Me and Yumina will help, too!"

There were likely unaffected people in this town, since we'd arrived mid-attack. The Crystal Zombies were probably going to rise up soon enough, so we had to make sure we got to the innocents before the monsters did.

Now that the wicked godbeast was a cocoon, things would be calmer for a while. But I didn't feel calm at all.

I sighed quietly to myself, knowing full well that a very difficult

battle was ahead.

“It’s okay. It’s you, Touya. We’ll survive.”

“That’s right. We’re with you, Touya.”

“...Yeah, you’re right. We haven’t got any other choice.”

Ultimately, that was what it boiled down to. We had no choice but to win. No matter what enemies appeared before us, we had to protect this world. Upon realizing that, I walked faster into town, my resolve bolstered by the encouragement of Yumina and Lu.



Interlude I: The Bewitching Forest

“You need my help...?”

“Yes. We need your help as a gold rank adventurer. The circumstances are unusual.”

Kohaku and I were sitting with Guildmaster Relisha, discussing a request.

“I understand your concerns about public and private concerns, and your duties as a grand duke, but don’t consider this as a request from the village. Consider this a personal request from me, instead of a service to the elves.”

Elves... They were forest-dwelling magically attuned creatures with long lives. They had several racial attributes in common with fairies, but it seemed like there were fewer fairies in the world.

In most countries in the world, you could see elves in the crowded streets here and there, much like Relisha here.

The image I had of elves was that they were forest-dwellers who lived separate from broader society, used bows to hunt, argued with dwarves, and looked down on humans as inferior creatures... More of a haughty race than anything else.

The fantasy elves that I knew about in my stories were kind of similar to the elves in this world, but there were a few major differences. A lot of elves in this world had come out of the forest and integrated into broader society. Those that did tended to be extremely sociable and interested in traveling. Some of them were surprisingly socially aggressive, too. Relisha was much like that. If she didn’t have a considerable drive, she would never have reached the status of guildmaster.

“Alright, what’s the request?”

“Elves originally came from the forests, and nowadays you can find them all over the world. But all elves can trace their origins back to the original seven elven villages. One of them is in the Kingdom of Ryle, and it has a major problem.” If I recalled correctly the Kingdom of Ryle was a country to the west of Lestia. I wondered what the issue was with the elves there.

“Have you heard of a Treant?”

“Yep. That’s a tree-based monster, right?” A Treant was a tree that

had become a monster, effectively. It had a face on its front and used branches as limbs. It also used its roots to move around. It was similar to a Wood Golem, but it was much smaller and more closely resembled a tree.

They were somewhat similar to the plant-based demi-humans that received nutrients through photosynthesis. So even though they were monsters, they were kind of in the same category as Alraunes and other green or bark-skinned humanoids. Plant-based demi-humans were incidentally one of the seven major races in Mismede.

“Even though Treants are monsters, they’re not really hostile. They’ll only ever attack in retaliation. However, some days ago, a Treant attacked the elven village in Ryle.”

“Seriously? But you just said they’re passive. What happened?”

“We don’t know. It was a sudden attack with no warning or provocation. The Treant had a different color to usual, and its leaves were ashen. The villagers have started calling it a Dark Treant. We elves, much like the fairies, do not employ much Fire magic due to our forest roots. That proved to be a downside for us, as Fire magic is the only major effective way of repelling a creature like a Treant. The battle ended up taking a while, and it escaped largely unharmed.” Relisha went on to explain that the villagers followed after the Dark Treant only to discover several enormous Treants deep in the woods.

“Wait... are there Behemoths or something?”

“I don’t really know, honestly. That place isn’t a magic hotspot, so this is most unusual.” Behemoths were typically formed due to massive magical concentration in the atmosphere, regular creatures would slowly absorb this magic buildup and grow to an immense size.

Behemoths could cause unprecedented national disasters if left unchecked, so it was important to kill them before they got out of control. I’d defeated a Behemoth in Ryle before, using a Knight Baron. If I recalled correctly, it was an enormous scorpion.

Either way, if it was Behemoths threatening the elven village, no wonder they were scared. No ordinary adventurers could stand against them.

“Isn’t the Kingdom of Ryle doing anything about this?”

“If we asked them for help, they’d send knights into the forest, but I’m sure the collateral damage would be great. The knights of Ryle lack a certain level of finesse...”

Relisha seemed concerned about the idea of them fighting. I wondered if they were really that clumsy... I guess it didn’t matter, though. Ryle was never at threat of war. They’d maintained peace with Lestia for hundreds of years.

“Alright, fine. I’ll check it out. If the Treants are Behemoths, will the guild buy the excess materials?”

“Of course. Treants provide high-quality lumber, so it’s a fairly popular market resource. Thank you for entertaining my request.”

I was an adventurer and a grand duke... What a troublesome double life. Still, I had to earn money to pay my knights, and I had to earn money to continue developing Frame Gears. I was covering all of that out of pocket, so I was fine doing quests now and then to keep that money stable.

Rosetta and Monica often bought a stupid amount of resources, and Fam was constantly importing new books... Flora kept on buying fancy medicines, and Parshe ended up breaking a lot of stuff as well... Ever since Doc Babylon joined the team, the costs just kept rising. Sometimes I wondered if inheriting her legacy was less of a boon and more of a detriment... Well, at the end of the day, I had to work to keep them in house and home. I kind of felt like a man supporting his family, despite the fact that I wasn’t even married yet...

There were many golden coins in Babylon’s storehouse, but they were all based on the ancient Partheno currency and were thus completely useless in the modern era. We managed to break it down into gold, but found it was full of impurities. I knew that golden currency coins weren’t pure gold, they were mixed in with other metals. That was standard... But the Partheno coins were ridiculously poor quality.

Doc Babylon mentioned that Partheno was once a beautiful and magnificent civilization, but by the time the Phrase came around it was rife with corruption. I felt like it would’ve been destroyed eventually even without the Phrase.

It was a shame, but that was how it went. I needed to focus on making an immediate profit. The elves were in trouble, and the reward was reasonably handsome. I waved goodbye to Relisha and left the guild.



“These are some big trees, these are...” Yae and I were walking around the forests of Ryle. It was a fairly large forest to the south-west of the kingdom’s territory. And Yae was correct. The trees were quite big.

I looked around and all I noticed was green as far as the eye could see. Deeper into the forest was even more dense shrubbery, dark and foreboding.

“Here we are. Watch your step.” Relisha was guiding us both along. We were on our way to the elven village in order to investigate the mysterious case of the hostile Treant.

Relisha and Yae weren’t the only ones here, though. There was Yumina, Elze, Linze, Lu, Hilde, Leen, Sakura, and Sue. It was basically

me and my merry band of brides-to-be. Kohaku and Paula were tagging along as well.

Leen, Sakura, and Sue had not yet applied to be adventurers with the guild. Leen had no initial interest, but upon hearing about the Dark Treant her interest was piqued enough for her to come with. Then Sue and Sakura asked to tag along, so I went with it.

Yumina and the other girls with guild cards couldn't really cash in on this quest, either. It was a quest for a gold-ranked adventurer, after all. And they were not quite at that level yet.

When accepting quests above one's rank, it was fine so long as you were in a part where the majority of members were the right rank. Unfortunately, I was one of only two gold ranks in the world, and my party was quite large. So they didn't get anything out of this.

Really, the girls were big enough to form two parties, but that's just how it was. Either way, they tagged along despite the lack of reward. I was kind of pleased to have their company.

"My liege. Something is coming." Kohaku suddenly bloated into her full Heavenly Beast form and began walking next to me. We stopped. If it was approaching us despite the fact that Kohaku was here, that meant it was no mere animal. There was a high chance of it being a monster or magical beast.

What we found was a tree, a moving one. To be more specific, a Treant. I didn't expect to see one so soon.

"This is... most different from a standard Treant..." Leen murmured to herself as she looked it up and down.

I'd never seen a Treant in person, but I looked it up in one of the guild's books and seen a picture. What was shown there was a large, thin-limbed tree person.

This one looked kind of like that, except there was one key difference on top. The leaves sprouting from this Treant were clearly dry, cracked, and dead. The one in the book had a vibrant set of green foliage on its top... I wondered if this was a mutated subspecies or something.

"Oooruuguuuhhh..." The Treant screamed out in a low, booming voice. All of a sudden some of the dead leaves at its top sharpened like blades and aimed toward us.

"Come forth, Ice! Eternal Frozen Ridge: [Ice Wall]!" Linze's magic caused a huge wall of ice to appear in front of us, blocking the razor leaf projectiles with ease.

Three figures used this chance to dart out from beneath cover. It was Lu, Yae, and Hilde.

They perfectly timed it with the release of Linze's spell, darting out toward the Treant just as the wall of ice melted.

"Regulus Blade Art: Scissorslice!"

“Kokonoe Secret Style: Lightning Flash!”

“Lestian Sacred Sword: Decapitation Blade!”

“Groooooouugh!!” The three-pronged pincer attack dug crystal blades into the Treant’s body. Even a Treant’s thick bark was nothing compared to a fully charged phrasium blade.

The monster, now torn asunder, fell to the ground with a massive thud.

“I’d expect no less from those who personally accompany the grand duke... Amazing.”

The three girls bashfully grinned as Relisha lavished praise upon them. Still, I wondered what was up with that Treant... Apparently Relisha did too, as she plucked a leaf from it and began examining it.

“This is the same kind of Treant that attacked the elven village.”

“So is this Dark Treant thing a subspecies or something?”

“I’m unsure. We elves have lived for a long, long time. This is the first time we’ve encountered a Treant of this nature. It could be a new mutation, though...”

“Are you sure it’s a mutation? Have you not considered that it may be a sickness? Its behavior and appearance are highly erratic...” Leen had a point. Treants were mostly passive creatures and didn’t harm unless harmed first. It was unusual for them to strike unprovoked.

For the time being, I stored the Dark Treant’s corpse in my **[Storage]**.

Birds would occasionally flutter out of nowhere overhead, giving an ominous feeling as we walked through the woodland. It kind of felt like the Sea of Trees, but much denser and creepier. Honestly, I wasn’t seeing much in the area to reassure me. This forest felt like bad news to me...

As we continued on, Kohaku suddenly stopped in her tracks.

“Something up?”

“Yes, there’s an unusual smell...”

“Huh?” Suddenly, a sweet aroma entered my nostrils, and it was overwhelmingly pleasant. I had no idea what it was, but it was all over the place. It might have been a fruit or something. Along with the smell, a dense mist began to descend around us. It happened before we could even tell what was going on, just a thick fog out of nowhere. I could barely see in front of myself anymore.

“Milord! Look out!”

“What?!”

As I wondered if it was an attack by a monster or magical beast... Elze suddenly charged at me full-throttle and pulled me into an embrace. She was squeezing me painfully hard.

“Wait, what are you doing?!”

“I got youuu... Nyuufufufu...” Elze let out an uncharacteristic giggle and simply refused to let go.

Hey! This is real nice, but I need to focus here, so please let me go!

“Heeey, Touya... You’ve been so busy lately, you know? We’re gonna have some good quality time, got it?! Me and the grand duke!”

“O-Ow! P-Please, hey! That hurts!”

“Nyuufufufu...” Elze continued on with her bear hug until I could feel my bones creaking.

Gaaah! You’re gonna break my goddamn spine!

“Ga-Ga... Gather forth, Darkness! Tranquil Rest: [Sleep Cloud]!”

“Hngh?!” A thin purple smoke settled around Elze and she slumped forward against me. She hadn’t exactly fainted or anything. It was more like I’d put her into forced naptime.

[Sleep Cloud] was an ancient spell I had uncovered while reading in Babylon’s library.

“A-Are you alright, my liege?!”

“Yeah... kinda... Just a little sore.” I used **[Cure Heal]** on myself and erased the pain. Just what in the world had gotten into Elze?

I couldn’t see any of the other girls through the dense fog. It seemed like we’d gotten separated.

“Touyaaa... Ufufufu...”

“Huh? Lu?”

Lu suddenly appeared from nowhere and hugged me from behind. She pressed her body right up against my back. My nose was still filling up with that strange, sweet scent...

“I’m really happy I met you, Touya... I could never find someone as amazing as you, even if I scoured the entire world for them...”

“W-Well, thanks I guess... Are you okay?” *Okay something weird is going on here! What’s the deal?! “Mmm... Heeey... How about we... smooch, and do other things...”*



“Ga... Gather forth, Darkness! Tranquil Rest: [Sleep Cloud] !”

“Uwaaah!” Lu fell to the ground.

What the hell is going on here?!

“My liege... I believe they might be intoxicated.”

“What?! With booze or something?!”

Wait, come to think of it... that sweet smell is kind of like sake, isn't it? Don't tell me this fog is laced! I suddenly heard a rustling sound from nearby, and Relisha appeared from the undergrowth.

“Your Highness, are you okay?!”

Relisha seemed to have her sanity, at least. I was a little relieved she wasn't as hug-happy as the other girls. Still, I wondered if the others were okay.

“Sorry, I noticed it far too late. Leen is watching the other girls right now.”

“What'd you fail to notice, exactly?”

“This is the work of the drinker mushroom.”

The what now?

“It's a species of mushroom. It detects nearby lifeforms and sprinkles out a liquor-laced mist from its spores. Its tactic is taking down its foes by getting them too drunk to function. The alcohol inside it isn't very potent, though, so it's ineffective against people with decent tolerance.” That made sense. Kohaku and I were unaffected due to my status as a divine being and Kohaku's status as a heavenly beast. Relisha and Leen had been alive for a while, so they'd probably had a fair deal of alcohol tolerance.

I took my smartphone out from my breast pocket and looked it over. Relisha had given me enough information to identify it... so all I had to do was search for mushrooms. It didn't take long for the search to work. Sure enough, there were three in the area.

“Come forth, Ice! Freezing Javelin: [Ice Spear] !”

Three spears of ice appeared in the sky. I used my smartphone to lock on to the targets and the spears quickly found their marks. I could've cooked them using Fire magic, but I didn't want the forest igniting and going wild. That was why I just opted to freeze them out.

They'd stopped moving on the map, so I figured they were dead.

“Blow forth, Wind! Soaring, Spinning Gust: [Whirlwind] !” I used Wind magic to disperse the fog. This made the airborne booze swirl around too, but it wasn't like we could get any drunker.

Then, I used **[Recovery]** on Elze and Lu, and they gradually woke up. The two of them stumbled to their feet, then nervously looked at the ground...

“...I think I did something stupid... Auugh... How embarrassing...”

“Uwah... I did something shameless...”

“Now now, you two. It’s okay.” They’d just spoken what they were feeling. Still, it seemed they were both embarrassed by what they could remember...

I headed over to Leen and found that Linze, Yae, and Hilde were fast asleep just like Elze and Lu were.

Sue, Sakura, and Yumina were standing with Leen. That confused me a little bit. Sakura maybe, but I didn’t take Yumina and Sue for people with alcohol tolerance.

Apparently, Yumina was the one who had put the other three to sleep. She had the Darkness aptitude, so she was capable of casting **[Sleep Cloud]** as well. Either way, I was glad they were alright.

“Everything okay here?”

“Mhm. The Belfast royal bloodline is rather tolerant when it comes to alcohol, especially its women.”

Huh, the more you know... Kind of a shame, though. Drunk Yumina would have been funny.

“I have the blood of the overlord within me. We resist poison well...” Sakura spoke rather bluntly.

It’s not really poison, though... is it? It was booze.

I had a feeling that if the Xenoahs’ overlord had heard Sakura talking about his blood being a benefit to her, he would’ve burst out into tears of joy. I should’ve made a recording for him.

I cast **[Recovery]** on the fallen trio and brought them back to their senses.

Then, I went to investigate one of the drinker mushrooms. Lo and behold, I found a one-meter tall mushroom with a gaping stab wound in its side. It kind of resembled an eryngii, as far as shape went. It had little stubby arms and legs, and a creepy face-like structure on its front.

Sure smelled good, though... I assumed it would taste even better after being cooked, but I didn’t quite have the guts. Kohaku, on the other hand, was salivating... Honestly, I wouldn’t have minded letting her eat it if she thought she could stomach it.

“This is unusually large... Drinker mushrooms aren’t normally this big, they’re usually about up to here...” Relisha brought her hand up to about half the size of the mushroom I was looking at. That was definitely strange... I wondered if there actually was an area of concentrated magic around here, after all.

Apparently, elves could brew a delicious booze from these mushrooms, so I put the corpses in **[Storage]**. In the end, money was king and I was here to rule... even if it felt a little weird... Still, I wondered if I should take payment in booze form or just sell the raw ingredients and get cash... I was in two minds.

“My head feels a little light...” Linze closed her eyes slightly and

rubbed her palm against her forehead. I'd already cast **[Recovery]** on her, so that should've healed any hangover she'd have. The spell was no good for motion sickness, but it did wonders for being drunk. She was probably just feeling bad.

According to Yumina, Linze started muttering a lot when she got drunk and said some embarrassing things. Yae just started laughing so hard she rolled around on the floor... and Hilde started trying to lecture a tree. Seemed like I'd missed quite the chaotic gathering.

"Drunk people are scary... Everyone changed all of a sudden and started freaking me out... When my dad drinks, all he does is get happy and sing a lot!" Sue grumbled quietly. I had no idea Duke Ortlinde was such a merry drunk... But I wasn't exactly a fan of finding out what his singing voice was like.

"Hey Sis, were you okay?"

"M-Me?! I-I was completely fine! Really! Nothing happened!"

Linze turned to Elze and asked a question that caused her sister to spiral into a panic. I got a little red in the face when I remembered what had happened. I didn't say a thing, though.

It was pretty dark, even though it was daytime... But that was because sometimes the dense canopy of the forest blocked the sunlight, and sometimes it was just blocked out by thick tree trunks. It'd be really hard to navigate our way around the place without my map. That being said, if we did get lost I'd be able to use my magic to get us home without an issue.

"...Hm?"

"Something wrong, Kohaku?" Sue, riding on the white tiger's back, suddenly perked up with a question.

"Be wary. I smell magical beasts in the area."

Everyone drew their weapons at Kohaku's words. Strangely enough, I couldn't really sense anything.

"...Whereabouts?"

"Could the enemy be above, could they?" Yae looked upward, and everyone else followed her gaze. The scattered sunbeams kind of made it hard to make anything out, and I couldn't really see anything that resembled a monster or magical beast.

"There's a species in this region called the Whip Monkey. They attack by using their long tails as whips, and often hang from overhead branches as they attack people that pass by."

"Huh..." I carefully scanned the treeline as Relisha spoke. I didn't exactly have good memories of monkeys in this world. From the King Ape to the monkey warlord in Eashen, they were just bad news to me.

Nope, still too hard to see up there... Alright, I know.

"[Long Sense]."

I sent my vision up into the trees, which was way easier than

looking from the ground.

Monkeys, monkeys... Let's see here... Nope, no monkeys. I can see a couple squirrels and birds, though.

"Kohaku, where'd you smell it?"

"That way... It's a faint smell on the wind nearby."

"Eeeeeek!" The sudden shriek made me drop my **[Long Sense]**.

What happened?!

"Wh-What's wrong, Sakura?"

"S-Something touched me... I-It touched me...!" Sakura answered Lu and moved her own hands toward her waist... before patting around her butt.

"E-Eeek!!!" Sakura let out another shriek as she flinched, hands retracting from her behind. Her palms were both covered in a bright, sticky fluid. She shook her hand and the bizarre mucous fell to the ground. At a glance it kind of resembled corn syrup, but it had a glossy, rainbow-like color to it.

"I-It's all sticky... Th-This is horrible... Please help, Grand Duke... It's horrible..."

Tears began to well in Sakura's eyes as she tried flicking more of the mucus off her hands. She shambled toward me like a zombie.

"It's alright, just hold still. Okay? **[Clean]**."

A dim green light surrounded Sakura from head to toe and rotated itself around her. All the sticky stuff on her hands and behind was cleaned up in an instant.

"Better?"

"Better... Thank you..." Sakura breathed out a sigh of relief and patted herself down just to confirm that it was all gone.

"What happened, exactly?"

"I don't know... Something touched my butt from below... I-It was creepy..." Sakura shivered in response to Linze's question. It must have been pretty unpleasant.

Hilde and Yae pointed their blades outward and took a guarded stance.

"Then there is an enemy around here..."

"You are correct, you are. I do not know where it is hiding, but it is here, it is... Leen-dono! Crouch down, please!"

"Huh?"

Leen obeyed Yae's sudden command and squatted down. The next moment, the ground beneath Leen was disturbed as if by an invisible force.

"Wh—?!"

"It is there, it is!" Yae suddenly charged forward, swinging her blade dangerously close to Leen's butt. Alas, the blade swept through nothing at all and came out clean.

“Gyuraughugh!”

“Oh?!” What I’d thought was nothing was actually something, and it made a noise! Yae had hit something after all.

It was like a large lizard. It had stretched out a long tongue and wrapped it around Leen’s parasol, which was now on the ground. Luckily, that tongue had been cleanly severed by Yae’s blade.

It had large, strange eyes, a big mouth, and a twisted tail. It kind of looked like a big chameleon. It disappeared suddenly, and I could only just make out its silhouette against the backdrop. It was like a shimmering oil on water.

Wait, it can blend in!

“It’s a Stealth Lizard! It folds up light with magic and uses it to disguise itself!” Relisha yelled out, and then I understood what was going on. It was the same principle as the **[Invisible]** spell that Leen and I used.

“You little jerk! Do you just vanish and lick girls’ butts?! What the hell kind of messed up monster are you?!” Elze growled as she brought her fist crashing down in its approximate area. It had vanished, but we could track it now. After all, blood was dripping from where its tongue once was.

“**[Boost] !**”

“Grahagah!”

Elze channeled all her power into her right fist and sent a mighty gauntlet smashing into the lizard’s body. It was blown away in less than a second and slammed into a tree... Or at least, that was what I guessed. I couldn’t see it. The foliage was noticeably more bloody in a certain area, so I made the assumption. Its camouflage finally dropped, and it began to twitch.

It was a massive creature given it was supposed to be a chameleon... It was about three meters in size. If you unfurled its tail and tongue it would have been even longer.

Once it stopped squirming, Relisha got a little closer to the bloodied area to investigate it properly.

“This is definitely a Stealth Lizard, but it’s much too large... Just like the Dark Treant, and the drinker mushroom... Just what is going on in this forest?” Apparently, Stealth Lizards were supposed to peak at about one meter. I wondered if the forest was cursed or something.

“I wonder if there actually is a gathering of magic in this area after all... Good grief... It got slimy stuff all over my favorite parasol, too... Don’t touch, Paula. It’s dirty...” Leen sighed quietly as she held her parasol away from Paula. The little bear probably wanted to grab it for her. That was cute.

“We’ll sort it out soon, don’t worry.”

“Thank you, darling!” Leen smiled quietly. Still, I wondered if

there was a magical wellspring somewhere. I wondered if we had another situation like Palerius on our hands in this forest. With so many oversized creatures roaming around the place, it was hard to imagine any alternative.

I looked back toward Leen, when suddenly Yae and Hilde were standing by my side.

“...What’s wrong?”

“Something is watching us from ahead, something is.”

“Yeah, there’s something up ahead, I think.”

“Ah, I see. I can sense someone in the trees, too... I thought maybe there was something up there. Probably just a mushroom again.” I wondered what the deal was, though... I assumed it was just a couple of mushrooms since they were just lying in wait, but how would they even climb up there with their stubby little limbs?

“I’ll take down the ones hiding in the trees. You two go on ahead and see if there are any others.”

“Understood.”

“I shall be swift, I shall.” The two of them rushed ahead into the bushes.

Hmm... There are definitely two on the tree... Around the left and around the back... Using full-on magic might be a bit much, so I guess I should just use a special bullet.

“Reload.” The bullets in my waist pouch were swapped into Brunhild’s cylinder, and I lined up my shot.

I fired the bullet and it hit the tree trunk dead center, which caused a spiraling whirlwind to burst out and spin around the tree. It was a weakened version of the **[Cyclone Storm]** spell that I’d imbued into the bullet.

“Gwah!”

“Gaaah!”

Whoever was hiding up in the trees fell to the ground pretty fast. And then, Kohaku immediately ran toward them.

“E-Eeep!”

“Wait... You...”

It was a couple of people, cowering in Kohaku’s wake. It took a moment to register, but I recognized their clothing. They wore strange masks that covered the lower half of their face, and they had long nails. They were clad in ponchos and had golden bracelets around their wrists and ankles.

“You guys are from the Rivet Tribe, right?” The two men both stared, eyes wide, at my sudden exclamation.

The Rivet tribe. They were a tribe from the Sea of Trees that excelled in poison-laced combat. We’d defeated them during the Pruning and secured the victory of Pam’s tribe.

They were also responsible for growing the massive Wood Golems that had rampaged in Roadmare... I had no idea what those tribesmen were doing around here.

“Hm... Let me guess, then. You guys are responsible for the irregularities in the Treants, aren’t you? What about the other forest creatures, huh? That your doing as well?”

There was a precedent for them being related to creatures exceeding their standard size, after all. I wondered if they’d been brainwashing Treants or somehow making them more aggressive. I wondered if the oversized monsters were their doing, too.

“Touya-dono, we have captured them, we have.”

“We’ve brought them over...” Yae and Hilde had brought over a couple other Rivet tribesmen.

“They’re from the Sea of Trees, then?”

“Who are they?” Relisha and Leen were unfamiliar with them, so they piped up curiously. Sakura didn’t seem all that interested.

I briefly explained what had happened back during the Pruning. When I posed that perhaps the oversized, hostile Treants could be their doing, Relisha nodded.

“We’d heard about the incident in Roadmare, but I never expected those responsible for cultivating such carnage would have made their way to elven territory...” The Rivet Tribe was banished from the Sea of Trees after their foul behavior during the Pruning.

It seemed like the remnants must have roamed around until they came to the forest in the Ryle Kingdom and started a new life here... Pam’s Rauli Tribe had accepted a few remnants who had repented, but a good portion of the tribe had refused and moved on. They were idiots.

They were probably still angry about what had happened to them. The elders of the Rivet tribe were likely still planning their revenge. They’d still be sore about their expulsion from the Sea of Trees, after all.

I’d learned from the captives that there were over a dozen Rivet tribesmen hunting in this very forest.

“Hunting, you say? Hunting what?” Leen sighed. That much was clear. They were probably trying to clear out the elves and claim this place as their own.

“I wonder if they’re trying to create something stronger than the Wood Golems with these animals and the Treants...” Linze was probably correct. They likely intended to drive out the elves from the forest, then breed the Treants to wage war on the Sea of Trees.

“I’m glad we came here, today... If we’d left this way longer, the Sea of Trees might have been in some real trouble.” In a way, we were lucky. The scattered and lost elven villagers would be in trouble...

They'd probably have had to take refuge in the Kingdom of Ryle.

I didn't want to run any risk, so I used **[Sleep Cloud]** on the captured Rivet tribesmen. That was after getting them to tell me where their tribe was located, though.

We carried on deeper into the forest. I suddenly saw birds fly overhead, cawing in a panic. Something was coming... The ground began to tremble, and the sound of splintering branches rang out as it approached...

It had an enormous crooked mouth etched into its wooden face. Its gnarled roots expanded out like legs, and a thick bed of dead leaves grew upon its top branches. Its dead face was almost twisted into a grin.

It was enormous. It was comparable to the size of a Wood Golem that attacked Roadmare. If this thing launched an attack, then there'd be no elves left to flee.

"Touya! Look out!" Yumina yelled, and I noticed another Treant of similar size coming out. There were... one, two... ten in total. Much more than I expected.

"Touya-dono, can you leave these Treants to us, can you?"

"Yeah, let's do it!" I opened up a **[Gate]** and called out a Chevalier. Then, I looked over to Yae and Hilde. *Oh crap, those things are getting closer!*

I opened up another portal and dropped down Hilde's Siegrune and Yae's Schwertleite.

The ground trembled as the two special Frame Gears crashed down into the forest.

"Let us go, Hilde-dono!"

"Very well!" The samurai girl and the female knight leaped into action. I had a feeling that the battle was going to go just fine.

"Hey, Touya! Don't let them both have all the fun! Bring out Gerhilde!"

"I got it, geez! Don't rush me!"

Elze ran up to me and grabbed me by the scruff of the neck. In response, I flailed a little bit and called Gerhilde down. Elze let me go and gladly ran toward her mech.

Geez... How rowdy...

"I wish I could go out with Grimgerde, but my Frame Gear isn't quite suited to this environment..." Leen's Grimgerde was equipped with heavy weapons. If she went all-out in that bulky thing, the forest would probably get messed up. She'd beat the Treants, but the elves wouldn't be too happy.

"I want to pilot Ortlinde, too..." Regular Ortlinde would probably be fine, but Ortlinde Overlord would be out of the question. The forest wouldn't even exist anymore.

I kind of wondered if I'd be okay to accept the reward if it was these three doing all the Treant-bashing... I asked Relisha, and she said it'd be fine. I was glad to have the guildmaster's personal reassurance...

"Alright, while they do that let's go after the Rivet tribe."

"Alright! Shall we get a move on, Touya?" Yumina smiled and tilted her head.

That seemed fine to me. I pulled up my smartphone and employed **[Search]**, since I could identify the Rivet tribesmen easily based on their getup.

In the forest, there were a total of twenty-three tribesmen. Excluding the four we'd already caught, that meant there were nineteen left.

"Locked on... **[Paralyze]!**"

I could hear a few faint groans of shock and a couple of pattering noises as they fell to the ground. That was that. All we had to do was tie them up and collect them. Although, I wondered if that was all there was to it. We still had more to deal with... Like those Treants.

Hilde's Siegrune effortlessly blocked one of the monster's attacks with its shield. The orange shield wasn't transparent, but it was still composed of Phrasium. I'd developed a special paint that allowed coating of the material.

Siegrune used the opportunity to charge forward and bash the Treant with the shield.

"Graugh!" The giant Treant was staggered, giving Siegrune a perfect opportunity to bring its blade down upon the creature. It was sliced in half with little effort at all, the Treant fell to the ground in two pieces.

The Treant's outer bark was tough, but that material was simply no match for phrasium equipment.

"They're different from the Wood Golems! Do these Treants have magical lifelines?"

"Yes! If you cut off the magical lifeline that runs up the middle of its body, then it should die! It's like severing a human's spinal cord! That part of the body is protected by the toughest bark, so be wary!" Relisha replied quickly and concisely. She certainly had good casual knowledge of these things...

"Haaah!"

"Grauuugh!"

Gerhilde smashed its fist right into a Treant's face. There was a dent left in the now-cracked wood, but it wasn't down for the count. It seemed like the Treant wouldn't die unless the lifeline in the middle of its trunk was cut off. That meant that non-bladed weapons were highly ineffective.

Gerhilde still had a small knife on its waist, so I figured she could use that to make short work of it...

“Haaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

Gerhilde’s left fist came down upon the monster all of a sudden. Then the right again! Left, right, left, right! A flurry of punches rained down upon the tree. I almost felt bad for it.

It was being absolutely pummeled to pieces. With each successive strike, more and more bark was chipped away.

“Eat this!” One of the pile bunkers on Gerhilde’s wrists finally came out, severing the lifeline. Then Treant fell, defeated. That was one hell of an attack... She even surprised me.

“Who’s next?!” Elze abandoned the Treant she had almost punched into sawdust and ran after her next target.

“Man... she’s really good at piloting that thing.”

The Frame Gear reacted to its pilot, and thus actually riding it became easier over time. In other words, the more you used it, the more it began to work as an extension of yourself. That was the case for all Frame Gears, even the Chevaliers, which was why I liked making sure that knights used the same one each time.

Relisha stared at the scene, of giant robots fighting giant trees, and muttered in amazement.

“This is truly something to behold... Even gigantic Treants can’t do anything to stop the Frame Gears...”

“We still struggle against the stronger Phrase types, though...”

“Without these giant warriors, I fear the world might have already ended. I don’t know who they are, but I really do owe a great thanks to the ancient genius who invented these...”

Don’t say that around her, you’ll inflate her ego... I don’t want her laughing and gloating all over the place, thanks. Although, to be fair, she is kind of a savior... Without Babylon’s genius, the world would be in a lot of trouble.

Still, it wasn’t her that repaired the boundary of the world... If whoever did that hadn’t done it, then the Frame Gears would’ve had to have been deployed far sooner.

Two-thirds of the world had already been ruined at that point, though... so I wasn’t certain if the Frame Gears would’ve actually made all that much of a difference.

“Kokonoe Secret Style: Lightning Flash!”

“Oh.”

Schwertleite dashed forward, slicing a Treant cleanly down the middle in the blink of an eye.

It fell down, making tremors run along the ground. Compared to the Frame Gears, these things were completely harmless... To be honest, Treants weren’t inherently hostile to begin with anyway. I

wondered if the Rivet Tribe couldn't have picked a better creature to equip for battle...

Either way, the deed was done. All the Treants were down for the count.

"You have my gratitude. The elven village should be able to return to its former prosperity now."

"Don't worry about it... We did a little bit of a rough job..." Relisha was thankful, but I looked around at the wreckage and kind of felt a little bad. In the end, it came down to monsters vs robots in the middle of a forest. Even though we won easily, we'd ended up making a hell of a mess. The local animals also caused us a bit of trouble.

"It's hard to use the Frame Gears in such an enclosed space..."

"Couldn't you have just used your teleportation magic to move the enemies to an open space?" I stared blankly at Sue, who had just raised a great point. Crap.

Relisha also stared at her, simply sighing and saying "Oh."

"...Sorry."

"It's okay."

I bowed my head slightly. Part of me wanted to get on all fours and prostrate.

After that was over we went back home. Yumina and the others were having a cup of tea. I was talking on the phone with Relisha.

"Wait, what do you mean the Treant bark is worthless?!"

Yumina and the others suddenly stared in my direction.

"It's not exactly worthless, but... you're not going to get all that much." According to Relisha, the giant Treant wood didn't have the same qualities as standard Treant wood and wasn't nearly as valuable a material.

The outer shell was tough, but the insides were surprisingly squidgy... Internally, they had the consistency of packing styrofoam.

I guess that made sense. The Treants weren't natural Behemoths or anything. They were the product of Rivet experimentation. It was no wonder their wood wasn't as good as the real deal.

"So that means we will not be making much profit, will we not?"

"Well, it won't be a total loss. We can still sell it as decent-grade firewood..." I came up with the best response I could to Yae. Money was still money, I supposed. It'd be less than a thousandth of what I was expecting, but... money was money. It could probably be used as a substitute for corrugated cardboard or something.

"Oh, well... On the bright side, the elven village managed to brew some alcohol from the drinker mushroom. Shall we go get it later?"

Everyone at the table, with the exception of Yumina, Sue, Sakura, and Leen, fell quiet and looked down at their cups. They'd all had a pretty bad experience in that mist, after all.

In Brunhild, the legal drinking age was fifteen, just as it was in Belfast and Regulus. That meant Yae, Hilde, Elze, Linze, and Leen would be completely fine to have it. I didn't really drink much, though.

Leen suddenly opened her mouth on behalf of the silent table.

"I'm not especially interested in fruity liquor, so I'll be quite fine. I think everyone else feels the same."

"...Seems so."

Well, that was to be expected. I picked up my phone and started texting Relisha, telling her that the village could keep the booze.

All of a sudden, a hand appeared from beneath the table and grabbed my wrist, stopping me from sending the message. *Augh!*

"Heeey... Don'tchu dare do somefing so, hic... stupid!" It was Suika... the god of alcohol, and she had clearly been listening in. I had no idea where the hell she'd come from, but she refused to let go. She was clawing at me like a zombie while yelling about the booze.

"Okay, okay! I get it! Let go, I'll get the damn drink!"

"Hic, yahoo! We're gonna drink, hic, the besht stuff! Yippee!" The drunken little rat immediately broke her hold on me and spun around on the spot before bowing.

Hey now...

"Good work, best regards, you have, hic, my thanks! I'm gonna go see if Karina wants some, too! Woohoo!"

We all watched her skip out of the room, bewildered and irritated expressions on our faces.

"...Is drinking fun, Touya? It kind of looks troublesome."

"Ehhh..." I didn't have a good answer to Sue's question. On Earth, there was a saying that went like "good wine makes good blood," but it was also said that "beer is the nectar of the nitwit"... Drinking to relieve stress was probably fine, so long as people never went overboard with it. Either way, drunkards would continue to drink. It was a simple truth of the world.

I sighed quietly and picked up my smartphone once more, this time to message Relisha about securing the booze.



Chapter III: The Phantom Thieves: ‘Red Cat’

“We’ve all had a formal discussion, and we’ve decided that we will remove the barrier that separates our island from the world. Thank you for your consideration.”

“Thanks for telling us. The Duchy of Brunhild will assist Palerius Island in any way it can, I promise.” I took Mentor Central’s outstretched hand and shook it firmly. They’d decided to formally make contact with the outside world, and I couldn’t be happier. I did, of course, already know about the decision they’d made thanks to Kougyoku and her familiars.

They’d investigated the Initializer I’d given to them and confirmed that it would do as I said. Then, they’d had several talks that all pointed toward a desire to join the world at large.

Now all we had to do was head down to the basement of the Central Temple and deactivate the artifact that was keeping the barrier in place.

We headed down the spiral staircase and finally came to the object. It was a large black monolith in the center of the room, with a seven-colored spellstone embedded in the middle.

The monolith was one meter wide and two meters tall, and it had to be at least twenty centimeters thick. It kind of looked like a massive door.

“So this thing controls the barrier...”

“There are other monoliths in each cardinal direction on the island. They interact with this one to maintain the barrier. If this one is disabled, then the others will cease functioning as well.”

I nodded along as Mentor Central explained the situation, and reached my hand out to touch the black slab. I found myself unable to touch it. A cushiony sensation surrounded it, preventing me from laying hands on it. It was an even smaller barrier. Made sense, this was something they thought needed to remain untouched.

The effect was likely produced by the monolith itself. That meant if I used the Initializer on the barrier surrounding it, then the whole thing would shut down.

I could easily use **[Cracking]** to disable it, but it wasn’t my job to do that. The right to take down the island’s barrier fell to Mentor

Central. She took the_INITIALIZER and approached the slate.

She would be the one to release the barrier that had imprisoned and protected them for five-thousand years. As an outsider, I couldn't even begin to comprehend what she must have been feeling. Either way, her will to put an end to all of this was astounding.

She brought the needlepoint tip of the_INITIALIZER toward the cushion-like barrier, and her thumb struck the injector's plunger.

In a flash, the magic stored within the_INITIALIZER flowed into the monolith. The pure 'nothingness' that had been hardcoded into the_INITIALIZER began to overwrite the black slab's other functions.

The barrier that had coated Palerius Island for the past five-thousand years was now gone.

I wanted to be sure, so I sent a telepathic message off to Sango and Kokuyou, who were waiting off-shore. I also sent a message to Kougyoku, who was airborne above the island.

"Did it work?"

«It did. The magic-diffusing barrier above the island is completely gone.»

«It has worked, yes. The fog around the island has gone. Ships will be able to freely navigate the area.» I passed on the message to Mentor Central. The island was finally free.

Now, all that remained was to mop up the monsters.



The hedgehog-like Behemoth fired out a spray of needles, but Lu's Waltraute strafed left and right, easily dodging it all.

That was all thanks to the B-Unit strapped to its back. The B-Unit was composed of several multi-directional thrusters that allowed for rapid speed and maneuverability. The B stood for Booster.

Waltraute charged toward the Behemoth and detached the B-Unit from its back, quickly swapping out and equipping the A-Unit, which stored four blades on to its back and waist. The A stood for Attacker.

It took less than a second for the two units to swap out. Waltraute then immediately drew two of the blades from its left and right waist sides and began slicing off the spines from the Behemoth's body.

The giant hedgehog suddenly curled up into a ball and attempted to strike back. Waltraute dodged the attack with little difficulty, but the hedgehog continued to roll onward. It was clearly trying to escape.

Lu responded quickly by ejecting the A-Unit and swapping it out with a heavy cannon on Waltraute's shoulder. She propped it up with the Frame Gear's arms and deployed the heel anchors. This was the C-Unit, specially designed for long-range shots. The C stood for Caster.

A massive bullet erupted from the cannon's length, firing out at incredible speeds. It struck the fleeing hedgehog, causing it to tumble

to the ground.

“Welp, she took it out...” I was using **[Long Sense]** to project my senses and watch what was going on. After I confirmed it was dead, the southern capital’s soldiers followed Dyent’s orders and went to retrieve the corpse.

The soldiers would be able to harvest useful raw materials. It was time-consuming work, but nobody from Brunhild was going to help them out with it. Why? Because we’d promised all the spoils to the islanders.

Lu warped the C-Unit back to Babylon and dismounted Waltraute.

“Yo, good job up there. How’d you find it?”

“It was very pleasant. I can change out the parts with little difficulty. I’m fairly sure I’ll be a good deal of help in the heat of battle.”

Lu’s Frame Gear, Waltraute, was a machine designed for fast-paced guerilla combat. It was a multipurpose jack of all trades built to adapt to any situation on the battlefield. The role of it in battle was to ride around the field and adapt to support others in any way it could. And so, despite its simple design, it had incredible potential in combat.

We’d dispatched Behemoth hunting squads to all four corners of the island, this corner included. Thanks to the removal of the barrier, we could easily use Babylon to track where the Behemoths were. It was only a matter of time before they were all gone.

The barrier was gone, but there were still a lot of magical wellsprings and hotspots on the island. It was never like all the Behemoths were going to immediately vanish when the barrier came down, anyways. Either way, after this cleanup they’d be a little more safe roaming outside their cities.

A merchant vessel from Elfrau was on its way, so all that was left to do was to see if both parties could reach a fair agreement with each other. I imagined that the early talks would be rough-going, but not impossible to handle.

I was honestly a little less concerned with this stuff and more worried about the wicked godbeast’s cocoon.

Weak or not, a god was a god. The beast had devoured the NEET god entirely and taken in his divinity. There was no telling what it would hatch into.

From what I was told, my body was a specially crafted vessel that had the capabilities to handle divinity. So the cocoon, being a rough and sporadic creation, would take some time to hatch...

My sisters were keeping watch on the situation, for the time being, so they were allowed to stay in the mortal realm a bit longer.

Apparently, their secondary duty was to train me as a newcomer

god, and that was what they were reporting back to their higher-ups. Funny, since I didn't remember them training me in any capacity at all. Well, either way, it was reassuring to have them nearby.

"Something on your mind?"

"Ah, no. Don't worry."

My sudden bout of introspection seemed to worry Lu. I needed to focus on the present instead of worrying about the threats of tomorrow.

I'd asked Mentor Central to show me Alerius Palerius' research notes from the ancient era. His notes were extremely old, so it was unlikely that anyone on the island would be able to make heads or tails of the stuff... but Brunhild had someone who lived in that era, so we could've been able to make use of it.

Babylon did, in fact, find herself capable of understanding them, and she'd shut herself away in the research laboratory, frantically scanning every single copy of the documents that I'd sent her. I was surprised that texts so old were still in such a good condition, but apparently, they'd been enchanted with an effect similar to **[Protection]**, so there was no wear or tear. More specifically, the spells he'd employed separated items from the flow of time entirely, preserving them in an eternal permanence. Given that he was a master of time, and the Sage of Hours, I wasn't surprised he could do that.

As I thought about that, my phone started vibrating. It was the mad doctor herself.

"Sup."

"Touya? I found something interesting in these old notes... I want you to take a look, are you busy?"

"Not at all. We're just about done here, so I'll swing by."

I ended the call after giving my response. I wondered just what that interesting thing could be... so I headed to the lab.

"Come see this."

The doctor showed me a notebook on the top of her desk. It was turned open to a page that had a sketch of what looked like some kind of armored suit. It had strange mechanical parts and clearly robotic joints.

"What is that... some kind of Frame Gear?"

"That's not it, no. The Frame Gear is a design of my own making, and it never formally came into the public eye during the ancient era. This thing is human-sized, see? Far too small to be a Frame Gear."

What? Like some kind of power armor? Sounds like something a billionaire might build in a cave with a box of scraps... But I digress, did the Sage of Hours make something like this...?

The doctor shook her head as if answering my thoughts.

"If you're thinking what I think you're thinking, then no. There

are too few notes about this strange armor. If he was the inventor of this suit, then why would he write notes like ‘it presumably draws power from atmospheric magic particles,’ and ‘I could potentially design an autonomous variant if I studied this more...’? These seem to be notes about something he hasn’t personally observed. Also, there’s more...”

The doctor pointed at a scrawled sentence written in the margin of the notebook. It was in ancient Parthenese, so I couldn’t understand it without magical assistance. The doc seemed to realize that, so she read it out loud to me.

“It says ‘The Gears of Time and the Gate of Dimensions, information from the adjacent world.’ The old man was studying how to traverse other worlds, remember? While he was unable to travel there himself... it’s highly possible that he managed to glimpse that other world... Or perhaps he even managed to summon someone over from it.”

Summoned someone over? Was he really capable of that? I mean, I guess it’s possible... but it would’ve taken a hell of a lot... I wondered if he’d been able to muster up enough power to bring someone over.

“Another possibility is that a traveler simply came to this world from another of their own volition.”

“Mhm... That’s definitely possible, yeah.”

There were others out there like Ende, after all.

“It’s possible that he tried to build that Door after meeting an otherworldly visitor and realizing there was a potential escape route.”

It was possible, sure... but I wondered if the armored suit was the person he’d met. Perhaps it wasn’t a human in a suit, but a robot. There was a lot of potential for diversity out there, so a planet of machine lifeforms definitely wasn’t out of the realm of possibility. Some part of me hoped there was a world out there filled with robots in disguise that could transform into cars and other cool things... but I had a feeling I’d never encounter anything like that.

Either way... if it was a visitor from another world, then maybe it came from the Reverse World... But would they have had a robotic lifeform five-thousand years ago...? Actually, come to think of it, there was that crab bus thing... I kind of assumed it was a vehicle, but it could be a living creature or robot... I guess things like that are just normal to the people in that world.

Whatever the case, I knew I wasn’t going to get any answers in this world.

“By the way, are you any closer to making your Dimensional Disruptor work?”

“As a matter of fact, it works now. Cesca let me put it in the garden. Your mana tank is there, too. My version of the portal will

draw magic from the tank whenever you're not nearby, so please top it up when you visit. It has incredibly high capacity due to my pioneering magic condenser tech, so don't worry about it running out too quickly. Plus, it's being amplified for efficiency thanks to the tower."

That made sense. The tower did seem to improve other Babylon functions. I was glad to have a tank with enough capacity to keep my magic running if I was away. Not that I really expected to be away very often... Still, having enough to sustain Kohaku and the others was a relief to me. I decided to fill it up with enough magic to last a few decades... Not that I ever wanted to be in a situation where I was stranded elsewhere for that length of time.

"So yes, I'd like you to test its activation and go through it... but I'd really like it if you could bring me as well..."

"That's out of the question. If I brought you, you'd have no way of getting back. If I manage to construct a similar thing on the other side that safely leads back to this world, then I'll bring you along. How about that?"

"Tsk... If that's really how it has to be, I can exercise my patience a tad more."

It was easy for me to return home by using the divine realm as a stepping stone, but a regular person like the doctor wouldn't be able to take that path. Only gods or those summoned by God Almighty could travel across worlds like that. Well, not including people like Ende, anyway.

However, if I could acquire a plot of land in that world, gather enough raw materials, and cobble together a version of the portal that leads back to this world, then the two would be more freely connected. That was still a ways off, though. And so, for the time being, I decided to go up to the garden and channel magic into the cylindrical mana tank.

It could definitely hold a hell of a lot. I drained about half my total capacity into the tank, and it still had a bit more space left inside. After that, I connected a pathway to it that would keep Kohaku and the others maintained. I was relieved to have that little problem sorted out.

She wanted me to test the activation, so it's not like I had to go to the Reverse World or anything... Though, at the same time, I wanted to verify a couple of things like if there was a difference in the way time flowed and stuff. I was in a hurry last time I went, so I didn't have time to focus on details like that. I didn't even get much of a grasp of the local area.

Before I went, I decided to call Yumina and the others to make sure they didn't get worried. I had a habit of just going off on solo

adventures without telling them, and I had a feeling it was a little bit irritating. I gathered them all in the garden and Yumina spoke up.

"I don't mind if you go, but please don't go over there alone. Could you take Kohaku with you? I think that'd be smarter."

"What, you don't trust me over there...?"

Yumina's gripe was a little frustrating. Although, she had a fair point about Kohaku. Kohaku was a Heavenly Beast, and my summon, so she'd be able to come back to the divine realm with me.

"It's not a matter of trust, Touya. You tend to go all-out and charge into danger. Having Kohaku with you might help temper things a little." I couldn't deny that, but if I didn't rush headlong into danger I might never have met my fiancées.

"We would like to come with you this time. You often take Kohaku and Luli."

"Indeed, you should take us this time instead. Sango and Kokuyou are adept at defense, and I can scout from the skies."

"Mmm... I agree this time. You should take them instead..." Kohaku nodded to what Kougyoku was saying.

Hmm... Those three?

Kokuyou was definitely inconspicuous, but the other two kind of stood out... They were about as obviously noticeable as Luli and Kohaku... but it was already agreed, so I decided to take them.

Thankfully, all my fiancées were fine with me leaving. I was a little surprised they were so willing to just go along with it... Well, it was probably because I'd confirmed to them that I was a god a few days prior. Plus, I promised to bring them all a souvenir.

I'd be staying for a full day. Though because it took some time to actually transfer, it'd be more like a day and a half.

I'd met someone in the other world. It was only one guy, but it was a start. He was a trader, so ideally I'd be able to get a start on making a foothold there with him.

Either way, I was kind of looking forward to investigating the place... Testing the doctor's door was a convenient excuse. My sisters would be able to contact me if anything really bad happened, too.

I began pouring my magic into the Dimensional Disruptor. It actually took a hell of a lot out of me, especially since I had already dumped a considerable amount into the tank. Still, I knew it wouldn't take too long to regen, so I wasn't worried.

The tachometer display hit 100%, and I saw an image appear through the structure's arch.

Oho? It's not the forest like last time. Looks like some rocky mountains... Guess it's because I'm entering from Brunhild instead of Palerius... Ah well, let's do it.

"Alright, I'm off."

“Make sure you get something to eat, okay?”

“Don’t talk to any weird women, either!”

Linze and Elze gave me some... parting advice as I passed through to the Reverse World. Just like before, it felt like I was walking through solid, squishy air. It felt extremely unpleasant.

I came out into a rocky area near the coast. There was the loud sound of a rushing tide, and some cicadas chirped in the distance.

As expected, I was in a completely different location.

“The ocean looksss nice. I’m glad to sssee that...”

“Mhm... I’d like to go for a swim...”

Sango and Kokuyou were pleased to see salt water, but we weren’t headed for a beach vacation.

“First things first, gotta figure out where the people are... Run Search, Human Beings.”

Oh. Crap.

I hadn’t entered any information about this world into my smartphone. I had no map. I was an idiot... I completely forgot to ask Mr. Sancho if I could use my phone to copy his...

“Should I call my kin to inform us of the local area?”

“No need for that, let’s just walk and take it easy for a while...” I declined Kougyoku’s offer and walked along the coastline. After a short while, we came across a lone fisherman angling near some rocks.

I used translation magic to talk to him and ask if he could give me my current location... I was glad to have met someone so helpful. He looked at Sango and Kokuyou floating in the air beside me and gave a strange look, but he didn’t say anything.

As it turned out, I was a long way from my original landing point... It was probably because of the fact that Brunhild and Palerius were far apart on the map. Either that or the destination was just randomized every time. If I recalled correctly, Mr. Sancho was headed toward the Allent Theocracy’s capital city, so that was where I wanted to go.

The directions kind of threw me off when I looked at the map the guy provided me with, but I was currently located about where Felsen was in the regular world. Allent was located in around the same area as where Roadmare was.

If I used **[Fly]** it wouldn’t take long to reach it at all.

“Alright, let’s fly.”

I used **[Invisible]** on myself and the others, just to be safe.

Looking down from the sky, this world looked pretty similar to the regular one. But I was in for a real shock as a massive airship sailed right past me. It looked kind of retro, like a steampunk style airship with a balloon. I wondered what the deal with the robot arms coming out of the sides was...

No, this world was not all that similar at all. There was a lot different here. It seemed like this world's technology had advanced a lot farther, at least.

Either way, I'd learn more once I made it to the theocracy. And so, I zoomed off, ready to find out more about this brave new world...



I arrived at the Allent Theocracy's capital city, but found myself in a bit of a predicament. Apparently, in order to enter the city, you needed to pay the toll or present identification... There was a long line in front of the city gates.

I wasn't too surprised that a system like that was in place, but I had a sinking feeling that my guild card wouldn't cut it in this world. Obviously, I didn't have any of this world's currency either. I wondered what to do.

"...We're invisible, aren't we? Can't we just bypass all this?"

"...Good point."

Kokuyou reminded me of the obvious, and I felt like an idiot. I didn't actually have to do anything. I was invisible, so I could just saunter on through.

I passed right by the security checkpoint at the gate. To be honest, I could've just descended into the city the whole time.

Anyway, once I got in, I quickly stepped into a back alley and undid **[Invisible]** on myself. Then, I stepped out into the streets and could almost feel the hustle and bustle of the busy town in the atmosphere. The buildings and paved roads didn't look too different from the ones I'd seen in the regular world... Plus, there were streetlamps dotted around that would be more at home on Earth. People's clothing seemed pretty standard too, but the most noticeable distinction was that there wasn't anyone around that I'd really consider a fantasy-style adventurer.

No, hold on a second... That's a neon store sign over there, right? Yeah, I'd recognize that kind of tubing anywhere.

It wasn't dark so the sign wasn't turned on, but it seemed to be a typical electrical sign. Then again, it could've been magic-powered.

"Hmm... I guess there are quite a few differences here..."

《My liege, look at that...》 I walked around aimlessly when I suddenly received a telepathic message from Kokuyou.

I stopped to look, and I saw a merchant cross an intersection riding some kind of clunky ostrich-like machine. I had no idea what I was looking at. It was ostrich-like in that it had a long neck, but it didn't really have much of a torso. It was kind of like a walking pogo stick.

《Over there, too...》

I turned and looked across the road... to see a spider-like machine with eight legs attached to eight wheels glide down the path. The eight legs jutted from a carriage, and I could see a man and woman sitting atop a seat, merrily chatting to each other and enjoying their ride.

It went by as I stared. The culture shock was starting to get to me.



«I guesss magitech sstuff is common in thisss world, hm?»

«I'm not entirely sure if these devices are magic or artifacts... Everyone seems to be treating it as rather commonplace, however...»

Kougyoku was correct. Everyone seemed pretty much used to the weird and wacky robots roaming around town as if such a thing was the norm here. I wondered if you could buy them somewhere...

"This really is another world..." I honestly felt like I needed to sit down with a cup of tea, but I didn't have any money.

Still, I knew what I needed to do. Thanks to my encounter with Mr. Sancho, I could use magic to read the local language, Allentese. I looked over the street signs and made my way toward what seemed to be a general store. I thought I could probably sell something to make some cash.

"Howdy there, friend."

The store I'd wandered into was a little place called Catan General Supplies. There were all kinds of miscellaneous goods lined up here and there. Sewing needles and thread, scissors and cloth. There was an abundance of recognizable stuff, but also some unusual things like glasses filled with liquids I didn't recognize.

"...Are you after anything in particular?"

The shopkeeper wandered over and offered his assistance. He probably thought I was suspicious. I did have some weird animals with me, after all.

He was a bearded, ginger-haired man who looked to be about thirty.

"Ah, no actually... I'm short on cash, so I was wondering if I'd be able to sell anything to you..."

"Sell to me? Hm...If you have any Rukugy Yarn or Leylightstones, then I'd be interested."

I had no idea what either of those things were. But given that he mentioned a stone, I thought perhaps he'd be willing to buy gold or silver ore.

"What about silver or gold?"

"What, you mean like ore? That's no good here. You'd be better off taking that to a jeweler, son. I don't know the value, so I'd just give you a rate that rips you off."

He was a surprisingly honest guy. I decided to find a jeweler. That was at least one method of getting some cash. While I was here, I decided to ask about Mr. Sancho.

"Excuse me, but do you know anyone named Pedro Sancho? I believe he lives in this city."

"You're a friend of Sancho's? His shop is a little bit up the street from mine. He'll probably be able to buy that gold and silver from

you. The store's named Sancho Shipping."

Apparently Sancho was fairly well-known. I was a little surprised by that fact.

I smiled at the shopkeeper and made my way out. When I stepped outside, I saw a small robot that somewhat resembled an armored knight following after someone who vaguely resembled an adventurer.

None of the citizens really batted an eye at it, suggesting that something like that was just the norm in this world.

Even though there was a technological aesthetic and the presence of sophisticated robotics, the people hadn't really moved past Victorian-style carriages. I found it a little odd.

It felt like there was a weird technology gap somewhere. But that was probably just the nature of this new, unusual world. I walked up the street, marveling at the mechanical mysteries around me. Eventually, I spotted the sign I was after.

"Ah, this must be Sancho Shipping."

It was three times as large as the shop I'd been in earlier. There was a space nearby that somewhat resembled a parking lot, and the crab bus was neatly parked right in against the wall. There was no doubt. This was his place.

I climbed up the surprisingly short stairwell and opened up the extremely fancy door. A door chime chirped as I opened it up, and an apron-clad woman in her late twenties turned to look at me.

"Ah, welc— Oh? Oh, ohhh! It's you! From the other day!"

"Huh?" The woman, who had chestnut hair all clipped together by a fancy decoration, walked right over the moment she saw me. She gently bowed her head to me.

"Thank you so much."

"For... What, exactly?"

"Ah, forgive my manners. You only spoke with my husband at the time. I'm Mona, Pedro's wife! I was inside the Gollem Carriage when you saved us."

"Gollem?"

"Yes, see? The vehicle right outside."

She pointed out the window toward the crab bus. From the looks of things, the whole area was just being used as a parking garage.

Still, I wondered what a Gollem was. Something like a Golem, maybe?

"I simply must call my husband! Please sit tight!"

"Oh, sure."

Mona trotted off inside the store and headed down some steps.

I moved aside slightly so I could look out at the parking area without bothering the other customers. There were a lot of things on sale in this store. They all looked pricey, too. It made the place feel a

cut above the store I'd been in not too long ago. I had nothing else to do, so I stared out toward the crab bus outside... Or, er, that weird thing they were calling a Golem.

"There's a part that kind of looks like a cockpit, but I don't see anything like a handle or a lever... Is it automated, maybe?"

I took out my smartphone and snapped a picture of it. There were probably stores that sold stuff like it, presuming it was some kind of generally available vehicle. Doc Babylon would go nuts if I brought one back for her, but I had a feeling they'd be pricey.

"Ooh! So you decided to visit, Tohya! I'm so glad to see you again!"

"Ah, Mr. Sancho... It's nice to see you."

I turned to greet the booming voice and found him standing there with a huge smile on his face. Everything about him, right down to the appearance and grin, resembled Ebisu, the Japanese God of fishery and luck.

I grasped his outstretched hand and gave it a firm shake, then began to speak.

"As it happens, I was looking to earn some money. I was wondering if your store purchased gold and silver, Mr. Sancho."

"Just Sancho is fine, and purchasing is no problem! Can I take a look?"

I took out a gold ingot from my **[Storage]**, and Sancho started staring at me like he'd just seen me, well, produce gold from thin air.

"Are you alright?"

"Just fine... I'd assumed you were an irregular person, Tohya, given how you dispatched that beast... but to think you would know magic as well? This is most unusual..."

It seemed magic wasn't a common thing in this world.

"The fact that you could use a storage spell without a card is incredible..."

"Sorry, what's a card?"

"See here. You've never heard of this before? This is a Storage Card. You must really have come from afar, Tohya..."

Sancho took out a small card from his breast pocket and held it above the countertop. A few coins then tumbled out of the flat surface afterward. *Whoa, this card must be enchanted with something similar to my spell.*

"This is a necessary item for merchants, you know? The cards have various tiers. There's common, uncommon, rare, and legendary. Anything legendary tier can store the most, while commons stores the least. This one here is uncommon."

"Wow... First time I've ever seen one." I looked down at Sancho's card. The idea was novel, but definitely useful. If I could make

something similar, it could be useful back home. I asked for a few more details and found that unlike my **[Storage]** spell, things put inside these cards were not suspended in time.

“Still... to have such curiosity over something so common... Just who are you, Tohya?”

“Dear, you shouldn’t ask so much of him. He did save us.”

“I suppose you’re right. Please accept my apologies for prying. Now, let me look over your goods.”

Sancho looked at me a little curiously, but quickly went on with his work after his wife gave him a glance. He began measuring it out on scales and weighing it against some cylindrical object, and then wrote down a few quick calculations on paper.

“Hmhm... Well, it’s pure gold. You really want to sell this?”

“That’s right.”

“Hmhm... In that case... would five plat suffice?”

“That sounds fine to me. Let’s do that.”

I had no idea of the value of anything in this world, so I just went along with him. Still, they had platinum coins. That gave me hope that the value of money was at least similar to how it was back in the regular world.

Then again, I had no way of telling if I could buy a loaf of bread or a house with one platinum coin. Though, the value of a metal coin was usually determined by the scarcity of the material used to represent it.

There was once a time when aluminum was worth more than gold, and another time when platinum wasn’t considered very valuable at all. Gold typically kept a standard and stable value, but that was only on Earth.

The shopkeeper from the store I’d entered earlier seemed to consider silver and gold to be precious metals, so the rule was probably the same here.

Either way, I had a question to ask my new friend.

“That machine outside... I’ve been seeing similar ones around. What is it, exactly?” I asked as I pointed out to the crab bus through the window.

“You mean the Gollems? We’re in the capital city, so it’s only natural that there’d be a ton of different types. There are the factory types like mine out there, but there are also legacy types.”

“Sorry, but... can a normal person like me buy one of these, uh, Gollems?”

“I don’t see why not. But you won’t be able to buy a very good one for just five plat.”

Seemed like these things were pretty expensive. They were probably around the same equivalent price as a fancy car back home.

It didn't seem like the standard person would be able to afford one, and it seemed like they were priced based on quality and utility.

"You don't seem to know all that much about Gollems, Tohya. Would you like me to explain a little more of their history?"

"If you could, I'd appreciate it. Thanks."

In response to my request, Sancho began explaining all he could about the Gollems.

A long time ago, there had been a great war. It started as a small dispute between two great nations, but the conflict escalated and consumed the entire world. Mechanical automatons were created. They fought on behalf of people, and war became more of a resource management exercise. Those automated drones were what the modern era referred to as the Gollems. A wide variety of them were created, and the war began to escalate. More complex machines were designed to keep up with the war effort. Eventually, both sides lost control of their drones. Masterless, the automatons did all that they were designed to do. Fight.

The world, as a result, was completely ravaged. But slowly, mankind rose up once more from the ashes of the annihilated civilization. They excavated the old world and rediscovered the secrets of the Gollems. They managed to reactivate and research some of these ancient machines, referred to as legacy types. From research into the legacy types, they learned how to produce inferior copies of the ancient technology. The mass-produced, downgraded models were referred to as factory types, and they were the most common Gollems seen in the world today.

"So the stuff I saw outside were factory types?"

"Correct. Legacy models are rather hard to come by. That's mostly because they very rarely appear on the market. You'd have better luck going to the ruins of the old world and trying to excavate one yourself."

Legacy Gollems seemed pretty rare, overall... Though, they were definitely obtainable if a person was determined enough.

"So is there a major difference in performance between factories and legacies?"

"That is one part of it, but the main draw of legacy types over factories is that the legacies have what we call Ability Charges. Each of them can wield different powers. Some could shoot electricity, while others might be able to manipulate ice, and so on. Given that you can use magic, Tohya, I doubt they'd be as useful or as much of a help to you."

That made sense. The abilities were what made legacy types more valuable than factory types. That made sense, since they were left behind by a more advanced society. What people on the other side

referred to as artifacts, were probably referred to as legacies here. What mattered was that a legacy was an ancient magical device with a wide range of effects.

Sancho smiled and took out my five coins.

I briefly asked him to explain basic currency value while he was at it, by asking how much he thought a loaf of bread would cost. It turned out that the cost was mostly the same as what I was used to. Since a platinum coin was worth so much, I asked him to split one of the five into ten gold coins.

The gold coins were smaller than the ones used in the regular world, but they seemed to be made of the same stuff. I used **[Analyze]** on the coin and found it wasn't pure gold, but an alloy with about a tenth of it being mithril. I wondered if mithril was common here.

Either way, I'd finally acquired my much-desired cash. I decided I wanted to learn a little more about this strange reverse world. If I could get more info, I'd learn more about these Golems as well.

"Sancho, do you know where I could find a bookstore?"

"There's a bookstore three doors down. It's not that big, though."

That was close enough, so I decided to start my search there. I thanked Sancho and Mona, then headed out. Once outside, I looked to the right and saw a bookstore sign about three doors down.

The atmosphere inside the bookstore was very different, somewhat more antiquated. There were a lot of books on both the first and second floors.

An old man with a long white beard sat behind the counter. He reminded me of a certain headmaster of a certain school for witchcraft and wizardry.

"...Welcome, my boy. How may I help you today?"

"Uh... Do you have any books on history or culture?"

"History? National history, or global?"

"Both, ideally."

"Second floor, then. On the shelving to the right. Second and third from the top. Feel free to peruse, but try your best not to dirty or damage." I bowed my head to the old man and went up the old creaky stairs. I made it to the second floor and headed toward the rightmost shelves.

"Hmm... Let's see... The Beginner's Guide to Allent... The Theocracy and You... The Western Frontier... The Legend of Matlack..."

"There'sss a lot, huh?"

"Yeah... But it seems like all of these combined aren't even one silver coin... I guess I'll get them all." I kept on looking through the shelves, picking out books that caught my eye. Books sure were cheap

in this world...

“Oh right, gotta find some on those Gollems, too.” There weren’t any formal books about Gollems, so I picked up a couple of books about the ancient civilizations.

I picked up a few assorted books on magic and technology and piled on a couple of romance novels for Linze as well. Kokuyou helped carry some of them as I piled them up.

“That’ll do, I think.”

I used **[Levitation]** in the end because there were over a hundred books. The old man at the counter looked like he was about to faint when he saw the massive pile of books float down from the second floor. Either way, he began calculating the total cost.

In total, the cost came to nine gold coins, so I paid with a platinum. I decided that instead of getting the one gold coin in change, I’d look around the first floor and make up the difference by buying books from there, too. I then opened up **[Storage]** and shoved every last book I’d bought inside.

“Th-Thank you...” The dumbfounded old man muttered his goodbyes as I headed out the door.

“Getting kinda hungry... I should probably eat.”

《Yeah, I’m hungry as well.》

《Me too, darling. I’d love to eat sssome eggsss...》

I walked around town looking for something to eat. I could’ve gone back to Sancho and asked what he might suggest, but this time I wanted to walk around and see what stood out. One of the best things about a trip to a new place is finding out things on your own, after all... Or well, that was what Elze told me, anyway.

Eventually, I found a small cafe. They welcomed me inside and I sat out on their terrace. They didn’t even mind me bringing my summons inside.

I did know Allentese thanks to my magic, but that wasn’t always helpful.

For example, I could read the menu just fine... but that didn’t necessarily mean that I had any idea what a “Snicken Sandwich” or a “Grabe Juice” was. I was a little excited when I made the order... But when it arrived, I got what resembled a chicken sandwich and grape juice.

It tasted good, though. Actually, it was really good. There was no point getting hung up on the ingredients. Good food was just good.

The trio with me were also enjoying their food. Kokuyou was tucking into some eggs, Sango was eating some fish, and Kougyoku was eating some mixed veggies.

I looked down across the streets as I slowly relaxed and ate. I liked looking at the different types of Gollems as they passed by on

the street.

Come to think of it, I haven't seen any demi-humans... No elves or beastmen. I wonder if that's just because there aren't any around here... I hope they aren't persecuted in this world, too.

I drank what I thought was grape juice, but it actually tasted like tomato juice... Wasn't bad.

"Someone help! Stop that thief! He has my bag!"

I suddenly heard someone yelling from across the street, and I saw a young man sprint past the terrace. He was clutching a bag in his hands.

"[Slip] ."

"Gwuuuugh?!" He suddenly fell backward and smacked his head hard on the pavement. Then, he screamed and immediately passed out.

A blonde-haired young man suddenly came up from behind him and restrained the fallen man.

《Fine work, my liege.》

"Big cities tend to have more crime..."

I shrugged quietly and sipped at my juice, watching the citizen's arrest unfold. Soon two silver-armored guardsmen came by, seizing the criminal violently. They walked off with the blonde guy. I was pleased to see this city had guards, at least.

I decided I'd had enough people-watching, and went on to pay the bill. And after that, I decided to go around the city, checking various stores. I wanted to get souvenirs for my fiancées and God Almighty. I raised my brow in surprise when I came across a gun in a weapon shop. But interestingly enough, it didn't use gunpowder. Apparently, it was called a "Spellcaster," and it shot out bullets from channeled magic.

I wasn't too surprised to learn that this world didn't have much in the way of mages. People in this world were aware of magic, but those who could actually make use of it were extremely limited.

It was probably the Golems that hindered magic development. After all, if a Golem could launch lightning from its fingers, what reason would an unaware mage ever have to learn something like **[Thunder Arrow]**, for example?

You didn't have to pay an automated machine a salary. You didn't have to worry about it betraying you for selfish needs. It was probably that magic was only nurtured by a few select nations or people, so the gene pool just wasn't as populated with magic aptitude.

It might not have been that way in the olden days... But I'd know better after I had these books thoroughly analyzed. Not by me, though. Doc Babylon could take care of that.

Still, it seemed like there was danger in the Reverse World as well.

From what I gathered, there were gangs of people who thought tourists were easy targets.

“There’s two... No, three...”

《Yes. They’ve been stalking us for a while.》

They’d been following since I stopped the thief with my spell. They weren’t doing too badly, to be honest, but compared to Tsubaki they were rank amateurs.

“Wonder why they’re aiming for me...”

《You’ve been going around a lot of shops today. Perhaps they think you’re some rich idiot.》

That was probably it. I pretended to do a little window shopping as I confirmed that my stalkers were behind me in the window’s reflection. They were wearing hoods and looked like typical thugs.

Alright, let’s get this over with.

I picked up the pace a little and entered a back alley. The moment I got around the corner, I cast **[Invisible]** and waited for my pursuers. And when they began walking down the alley, I slipped in behind them and blocked their escape.

The three hooded individuals jumped in shock when I revealed myself.

“You guys need something?”

Two of the panicked stalkers glanced toward the third. That was their leader, presumably.

“I’d appreciate it if you spoke up or stopped following me. Or what, do I have to teach you a lesson?” I peppered in a light threat because I had no time for their nonsense. I didn’t know if they’d take me seriously, though.

“P-Please wait a moment. I’m sorry that we had to follow you, but could you please hear me out?”

The leader spoke up, revealing the face of a woman as she unfastened her hood. She looked to be in her twenties, with red hair and sharp hazel eyes. She exuded the aura of someone trained in combat. The fact that she had a short haircut only increased that sense of masculinity.

“The bag-snatcher on the terrace. You used magic to incapacitate him, didn’t you?”

“And if I did?”

That was interesting. She knew I’d used a spell despite the fact that it was just a brief invocation. Then again, there were people out there who were attuned to magic use even if they couldn’t use it themselves.

“Can you cast other spells?”

“Somewhat, yeah.”

“Curse-breaking spells...?”

“Depends on the curse. If the curse has come along too far, then removing it could hurt or kill the person with it.”

The term “curse” covered a great many effects, like confusion, petrification, lethargy, illusion, bewitching, and so on. A lot of those effects changed over time, too.

My **[Recovery]** spell was capable of ending these for the most part, but it wasn’t always so simple. For example, if a curse effect strengthened someone’s body, and that curse was then removed, their un-empowered body wouldn’t be able to handle the new strain, and they’d die.

[Recovery] was also ineffective against more complex curses. For example, the curse I’d put on those slavers a while back.

Every time a person with that curse knowingly committed a crime, a part of their body would be paralyzed until it eventually stopped their heart.

The spell only cured abnormal bodily conditions, for the most part. The paralysis effect could be cured with **[Recovery]**, but the curse itself would still remain. Another crime would result in another paralyzed limb, so it wasn’t a perfect solution.

That was why it was important that I knew exactly what curse someone was suffering from...

“You have a friend who has a curse, or something?”

“That’s right. Someone we know touched a cursed artifact and fell comatose. It’s been weeks, and they’re still not awake.”

Hmm... Probably lethargy. That’s curable, so long as it hasn’t affected their mind.

“We owe a great deal to that person, so please... if you could remove her curse, we’ll pledge our service to you. We’ll do anything!”

The two hooded individuals next to their leader removed their hoods as well. One had a ponytail, and the other had wavy hair. The one with the brown ponytail seemed a little younger, and the one with the wavy auburn hair looked to be closer to my age. That was just a guess, though.

I wondered what to do.

《They’re in trouble, darling. You’re going to do what you alwaysss do, and help out the needy little people, right?》

《Don’t give me that...》

I interjected a thought against Kokuyou’s spot-on rambling. They had a problem, that was true... It had nothing to do with me, that was also true. All I did was cast **[Slip]**, which in hindsight was probably what got them so interested in me.

This was annoying. I didn’t exactly want to stand out. In fact, I didn’t want trouble following me around at all.

Still, abandoning them would have left a bad taste in my mouth. I

was also curious about what had caused this curse.

Well, it wasn't a big deal. If a problem came up, I could just retreat to the regular world. Plus, I wasn't a world leader in this world, so I had a little more freedom.

"I don't know if I can lift the curse, but I can at least take a look."

"Thank you so much."

"Th-Thank you!"

"Obliged, sir."

The three of them bowed their heads. I couldn't make any promises to them, but I wanted to at least try. Kougyoku made a small, exasperated sigh, but I pretended not to hear it.

"We'll take you to our home, then. Sorry for taking so long to introduce myself. I'm Est Flotier. I'm second-in-command to our organization, Red Cat. We're Phantom Thieves."

"Ah, I'm Mochizuki Touya. Wait, did you say... Phantom Thieves? Huh? Red Cat?"

Phantom Thieves? Like... Nezumi Kozo, Robin Hood? Like Ishikawa Goemon and Arsene Lupin?! No, wait. Wait. That part isn't important here, she just said they're thieves!

"You've never heard of Red Cat? You must really be from out of town..."

The ponytailed girl seemed confused, but it wasn't like I was from nearby, so how was I supposed to know? Anyway, it seemed like they were well-known, but that didn't change their criminal status.

I frowned slightly, and Est piped up in response.

"We may be thieves, but we steal from the rich. We take from corrupt merchants and cruel nobles. Those that prey on the weak. That's why we're Phantom Thieves, not just regular thieves."

I guess that makes sense... I broke my fair share of laws by coming here. Oh crap, that's right. I didn't pay the toll! I should go back later and do that.

"...Well, don't worry about it. I'm sure you guys can explain more later. But if you want me to help, make it quick. I'll be leaving the city tomorrow."

"Very well. Please come with us."

With that, Est turned and started walking. *Man... I didn't wanna get into anything, but... I guess I've got no choice.*

Ultimately, I couldn't keep myself from getting involved.



It seemed that the eastern district of Allen City was where the poor people lived.

I was following after Est, who had introduced herself as the second-in-command of Red Cat, a group of supposed Phantom

Thieves. She was accompanied by a ponytailed girl named Euni, and a wavy-haired girl named Euri.

The streets were a lot less pretty than the ones in the shopping district I had been walking through earlier that day, the people around looked weak and impoverished as well. I wasn't too surprised. Most big cities had districts like this.

Eventually, we veered off the main road and went into a back alley. After a short while, we came to a dead end.

There was nothing but a large amount of old wooden boxes piled up at the end of the alleyway.

We passed the boxes, revealing a small manhole cover on the ground.

"Don't tell me..."

"This is an entryway to an underground passage. This city has a lot of tunnels if you know where to look."

Est opened up the cover and began descending. I followed after her, clambering down the old ladder rungs. Eventually, it led to a wide-open space.

"Damn, this is like a dungeon..."

Despite the fact that we were underground, it was pretty lit up. That was because there were shiny objects spaced around ten meters apart and hanging from the walls. I took one of the objects into my hand to inspect it further. I found each was a small glass cylinder around the size of an AA battery. They had a small amount of liquid and a little stone inside. It was the stone that was emitting the dim light.

"What's this?"

"Huh? You've never seen Leylightstones before? The whole city uses them!"

"I'm from out of town, remember? I don't know much about these parts."

This must be what the shopkeeper was referring to earlier. It was explained to me that the stone produced light when immersed in water. Because of that, it could only be mined at night during the rainy season. The stone would glow more depending on the purity of the water.

I wondered if the neon signs I'd seen also used a similar kind of method. You could probably grind the stones up until they were fine gravel, and run them through thin colored piping. I had a feeling that if water passed through, it'd light up like neon.

The world I'd come from didn't have anything like this... Unless you counted the chandeliers in Felsen, which were enchanted with **[Light Orb]**.

I continued on following Est, Euni giving me the occasional

suspicious glance.

When we turned the corner, Est suddenly stopped. She unsheathed her sword and began scraping it against the wall. She seemed to have some method to her movements... And it wasn't long before part of the wall slid away to reveal a hidden passage. I was impressed.

We stepped inside, and two men suddenly appeared to close the passage behind us.

Aha... So the scraping was a signal for them to open up. That's pretty smart.

We carried onward until we came out into a large room with a group of bandanna-clad men. All the bandannas were red, of course.

They looked over to us, stood, and bowed before sitting again. They were probably members of Red Cat. I assumed they were on break or something.

We carried on through another passage and came to a heavy iron door guarded by a massive armored man. He had to be at least two meters tall.

I quickly realized that this was no man at all. It was a Golem. It resembled a large armored samurai, very Japanese in design. You might think it was an armored man at a glance, but it clearly had doll-like mechanical joints.

It wore a helmet with two enormous horns that curved upward. The helmet kind of resembled the one that belonged to Fukushima Masanori, if I remembered correctly it was granted to him by Kuroda Nagamasa...

"That's boss Est's Golem, Akagane..." Euni muttered quietly to me.

Damn... Even its name is Japanese-sounding. Akagane, meaning copper... I guess the Reverse World has something similar to Japan and Eashen, too.

Akagane opened up the massive door and let us inside. After we all entered, it closed the door again. As I thought, it acted as a guardian gatekeeper.

The door opened up into a wide, cluttered room. Junk was strewn about haphazardly, and the only source of light was a glowing tube hanging from the ceiling. Presumably, it was being lit by that stone as well. I noticed other dull pipes connected to the glowing one.

It seemed like there was a nexus of pipes transporting water around the complex. The source seemed to be a large tank nearby.

The big desk in the middle of the room had a pair of headphones on it, attached to some kind of comms device. There were also rough sketches of a house schematic. I saw some photographs, too. That was a surprise... I didn't expect this world to have photography.

Either way, this seemed to be the command center. There were all

kinds of interesting things dotted around.

I looked up from the desk and cast eyes upon the girl seated in a huge chair by its side. I said seated, but she was actually slouched over it, asleep.

“Who’s this?”

“Our leader, Boss Nia...” Euri sighed slightly as she answered my question.

So this is the leader of the Phantom Thieves, huh...? Est briskly walked over to her snoring, stalwart leader and... without further ado, slapped her across the face.

“Bwaugh!”

The force of the impact caused both chair and leader to fall to the ground. Nia quickly opened her eyes to a half-lidded state, and stared at Est.

The girl was around my age, she had long red hair styled into pigtails. She wore a red jacket and some shorts; they looked comfy and easy to wear.

“What the hell?! Wait, Est?”

“Don’t slouch around in the command center! Do you think a slovenly, dozing face like that is proper for a young woman, Nia?”

“C-C’mon... It’s not like anyone was around to see...”

She pouted slightly, before turning to look at me.

“Who’s this?”

“He’s someone who may be capable of curing Elluka. We found him in the shopping district. He’s called Mochizuki Touya.”

“Seriously?!” Nia clambered to her feet and kicked the chair out of the way.

“You’ll be able to cure her, seriously?! I dunno... You don’t seem all that hot.”

“I won’t know until I see the patient.”

Yeesh... You don’t have to judge me so quickly... I tried flashing a small smile towards Nia, but she just glared at me.

“Well, whatever. You can come this way to check her out. Try anything weird and you’ll regret it, got that?!”

The girl was acting like the kind of boisterous delinquent you’d find in an anime, she really wasn’t being very nice to me at all... Just as I was about to sigh, a karate chop from Est came crashing down on the girl’s head.

“Do you understand our current position? We’re the ones asking him to do something that may well be an impossible feat. Think before you speak, you idiot.”

“Ow, ow! O-Okay! Ow! I get it, quit it already!”

A series of thumping noises rang out as Est began striking Nia across the head. Nia began sniffing and whining. I was a little

confused as to who the boss actually was here.



《Thesse people are rather ssstrange. Are they really Phantom Thievs?》

《I have my doubts about their capabilities, too...》

I could do nothing but shrug as Kokuyou and Kougyoku let me know their thoughts.

“Anyway, come this way. We’d like you to examine her...” We headed into a small passage along the side of the room, and came to another large metal door. Euni and Euri stayed in the command room. That left myself, Nia, Est, and my summons.

I glanced around the new area and saw someone in a bed along the side of the wall. Laying down next to the bed was what I thought at a glance was a dog, but it actually seemed to be a wolf. It was staring right at me.

“Lady Nia, Lady Est. Who is this man?”

“It can talk?!”

The wolf spoke in a deep, masculine voice. I wondered if he was a summoned beast or something. I turned to Kokuyou and the others, but they shook their heads at me, as if to suggest that this wolf wasn’t.

“This is Mochizuki Touya. He might be able to dispel Elluka’s curse. Touya, this is Fenrir. He’s Elluka... the curse bearer’s, Gollem.”

“This thing’s a Gollem?!” I raised a brow at what Est had told me. I had no idea that this thing was a Gollem, especially given that it looked just like a real wolf... Plus it could talk! I was learning a lot.

“Aha, I see! Wonderful. My mistress won’t be able to continue her pilgrimage if she can’t wake up, so please help her.”

The wolf Gollem began wagging his tail merrily. He was pretty much indistinguishable from the real thing. It was entirely possible that the people in town hadn’t thought too much of Kokuyou and the others because they assumed they were just weird Gollems.

“...Let me take a look, then.”

I wanted to learn more about the wolf, but I had to attend to the bedridden girl first. She looked around twenty years old. She had long, unkempt hair. It was silvery, and tucked gently beneath her blanket. There were thick, round glasses on the table by the bedside. I assumed they belonged to her.

The flow of magic through her body seemed fairly normal, so the curse wasn’t affecting her on a psychological level.

“You said that she got this way after touching an artifact?”

“Ah, yes. The curse was placed on a jewelry box that belonged to a noble. Apparently anyone who opened the box would be cursed by it...” Fenrir quickly answered my question. He had a nice, confident voice. Very manly. It was weird to hear it from a wolf.

“Do you guys have this box?”

“Yeah, right here!” Est opened up a drawer and took out a jewelry box. It was gaudy and bright, definitely some kind of high-class item. It was tightly bound with string, likely to prevent anyone else from opening it up.

I had her place it on the side table, and fired up my magic.

“**[Analyze]**.”

*Hmm... Yep, this is a coma-related curse. It's pretty simplistic, but I guess given that this world doesn't have much in the way of recovery skills, it could have caused trouble if I wasn't here. Yeah... Hm... This curse makes the victim sleep until they die. That's rough. It seems like the curse is activated when a keyword is recited, and disabled when it's recited again. So it's an anti-theft measure. That makes sense. The people in this world must use curses instead of locks, that's pretty crafty. I guess the noble was the one who set this to begin with... I can probably undo it with **[Recovery]**, I think.*

“Alright, no problem. I'll be able to solve her curse.”

“Seriously?!” Nia blurted out her surprise, and I gave her a sidelong glance before reaching out my magic to the bedridden girl.

“**[Recovery]**.” A gentle light descended upon the girl, and slowly faded away. With that, the curse should have been lifted.

“Hngh...”

“Mistress! It's me, do you hear me?”

“Mmh...? Fenrir? Lemme have five more minutes...”

“Don't go back to sleep at a time like this!”

“Gwugh!” Fenrir jumped up into the air and hit the bedridden girl with a body slam. *...Just how much do Golems weigh, exactly?! The bed totally creaked just now! You dumb dog, you might have broken something!*

“Oho! You did it! Good job!” Nia grinned and gave me a firm thwack on the back.

Ow...

She kind of reminded me of General Leon from Belfast... What freakish strength. Elluka, who was apparently something called a “Technologist,” said she'd get changed, so we walked back into the command room.

Euni and Euri sighed in relief when they learned that Elluka was safe.

“We owe you a great debt for this. I suppose we should reward you, but what would suffice?”

“Hrmm... A reward for solving a curse, huh...? Kind of reminds me of that time with Duke Ortlinde... I don't suppose you guys have enough money as the king of Belfast, though...”

“Belfast?”

“Ah, no, nothing...” I gave a vague response to Est. Technically

speaking, it wasn't really a curse I'd solved back in Belfast, or the king's incident either.

When I helped the duke, I got some money and a medal. That helped me out socially. For the king, I got money and a home. I was a little reluctant to receive a reward from a group of thieves, since they probably pilfered it.

"Hm, well... I guess there's nothing I really want right now. How about I just let you guys know if there's anything I need next time we meet?"

"Oh? You know, we'll be changing bases soon, so we won't be here forever."

"Oh, really...?"

"Yes. We originally came here so that we could fix my Gollem, and that's why we have this little base. Our actual headquarters are in the northern mountains. The knights of the kingdom will likely learn about that location soon, though, so we'll have to flee at some point."

Mm... Phantom Thieves of justice or not, they're still criminals. Getting caught would be dangerous for any of them... That being said, I didn't know Nia had a Gollem.

"Elluka is an expert Technologist, and her specialty is Gollems. Currently, she's been working on repairing mine. Only a person of her renown, hailed across the world as the Restoration Queen, could be capable of repairing a crown unit. Though, she said she'd only be able to fix it up a little."

I didn't really understand what a crown unit was, but the gist of the situation was that Nia had called Elluka over to repair her damaged Gollem. During their search for the necessary materials, the Technologist opened up the jewel box and contracted the curse.

"I'm capable of using tracking magic, so I should be able to find you if I ever want to see you guys again."

"...Just what kind of things can you track with that magic?"

"Just about anything that I can recognize. For example, Est, I couldn't search for your mother if you asked me to. But I'd probably be able to find her if you had a good picture of her."

Even though I said that, my spell was a little limited in this world since I hadn't finished updating the map to work with the new world. Currently it only covered the capital. If I used Kougyoku to summon a couple thousand birds it would only take a few days to map the whole world, though. I didn't know much about the climate of this world, though... Plus I didn't have any reserve mana tanks here. They'd end up vanishing the moment I went back to the other side.

"You certainly seem plenty capable... Have you considered joining up with Red Cat?"

"No thank you."

“No need to answer so fast... So meaaan... Oh, oh. How about you teach me magic? Show me a spell that can blast my enemies away like ‘Kablammo!’” Nia grabbed on to my arm and began shaking it around. She was beginning to annoy me.

“You can only learn magic if you have an elemental aptitude. There are a lot of people in the world who just can’t learn it no matter how hard they try.”

“Then test me on this aptitude stuff! If I don’t have any, I’ll give up!”

“Maybe next time.” Magic wasn’t exactly well-known in this world, so I had mixed feelings about teaching its workings to a group of outlaws, Phantom Thieves or not.

“Whaaat? No waaay! So meaaan! Teach me magic! Magic! C’mon! It’s not gonna hurt you to— Owwww! Owie!” Est swiftly delivered a karate chop to Nia’s head, stopping her whining .

“Please learn from what I say to you, Nia. Act in a way that befits your position. Because you act so childishly, I’m the one saddled with repairing Rouge. Perhaps you should consider the consequences.”

“But if I know magic, then I’ll be able to do better! I won’t make another mistake like that again, duh! Teach me magic, Touya! Teach me!” Nia began yanking at my arm again. Just as Est was about to smack her again, the nearby door opened up.

“Quite the interesting conversation you’re having. Perhaps I can join in?”

I turned toward the voice and saw the wolf Gollem, Fenrir, and his mistress Elluka. She looked... Special.

Frankly, she looked like a mess. Her unkempt silver hair straggled out in a messy tuft. She wore a bedraggled old robe, and her glasses were... Round, and thick. Like the bottoms of glass bottles. It wasn’t like she wasn’t pretty, but she definitely wasn’t concerned about her looks. She resembled a mad scientist, basically. She kind of reminded me of a certain other mad scientist I knew, only somewhat more mature. And a tiny bit less stylish.

“Allow me to introduce myself. I am Elluka Patolakshe. I’m a Technologist, specifically a Gollem Engineer. Thank you for helping me.”

“I’m Mochizuki Touya. Don’t worry about it.”

Elluka smiled at me. Helping her was no big deal, I was just a little curious.

“I’m glad that you helped Elluka out... but would you be able to help Rouge, too?”

“You little brat... Why don’t you listen? He helped Elluka, but that doesn’t mean he’d do that!”

“O-Owie!” Est unleashed another deadly strike to the top of Nia’s

head.

I wonder how many times this has happened.

Elluka looked over at the two before beginning to speak.

“We still lack materials. We’re in dire need of orichalcum. The leader of this nation should have some, but...”

“No buts, we should steal from the wicked to help the needy.”

“Aw geez... We gotta find more of that stuff, huh?” Nia grumbled as she flopped out on to the command room’s table.

“I have some orichalcum...” I muttered, and Nia suddenly jolted up in her seat. She stared right at me.

What?

“You really have the divine gold? You have orichalcum? No way...”

“Uh... Yep. Here, look.” I opened **[Storage]** and took out an orichalcum ingot. I plopped it on to the desk. Elluka took it into her hands and began tapping it with a small cylindrical object.

If I recalled correctly, Sancho had one too. It must’ve been some kind of tool for measuring purity.

“It’s the real deal. I’ve never seen orichalcum this pure, either. Do you perhaps have hihi’irokane or adamantite as well?”

“I do... but not as much. Here.”

I used **[Storage]** to pull out some more ingots for her to inspect. She used her little tool to confirm what they were.

“Touya, I apologize if this sounds rude but... could we purchase this? We’ll pay the proper price, we promise.”

“Sure, no problem. Selling this little is fine.”

“Just who are you...? Some kind of noble?”

Hahah... Actually I’m a grand duke. I laughed a little and deflected the question.

“This should be enough to repair Rouge. I’ll need about a day, but —”

“W-We have a situation!”

The door Akagane was guarding suddenly flung open, and a man charged into the room. His breathing was ragged and sweat ran down his brow. He looked as though he had sprinted here.

“O-Our mountain hideout is under attack! The knight order is heading there in droves!”

“What did you say?!”

“Was the messenger we sent out caught or something...?” Nia stood there in shock. It seemed like information about their headquarters had been leaked.

“Gh... We can’t do anything with Rouge right now, but Akagane should be able to help them... Est, what do we do?”

“I don’t know if we can make it in time... It’d be wisest if we fled

this place and left them to fend for themselves...”

“None of that! A Red Cat does not abandon its family!” Nia slammed her fist into the desk.

Guess she really cares about her comrades... Then again, she is the boss.

“I could help.”

“Huh?!” Nia shot me a weird look. But I could understand why.

“Display Map. Allen City Outskirts.”

“Displaying.”

“Whaaat?!” Nia and the others stared wide-eyed at the map I projected into the air.

Damn... the map's only showing places I've been or flown over. I knew it wouldn't be that easy. In the other world, God Almighty filled up the map for me... but there's no way I can ask him to do that for me again.

“Look, I have a form of magic that allows me to instantly travel to any place I've been to before. This is my first time in the capital, so I can't go anywhere except the places shown on the map.”

“You can do that...?! You mean to say you can instantly move anywhere on this map?! How many can you take with you at once?”

“I can basically take as many as I want. I've moved hundreds with this, before.”

“Euni! Gather everyone here! We're preparing for a fight!”

“R-Roger that, ma'am!”

Est barked orders to Euni, who charged out of the room in a hurry.

“You really can do anything, huh...? Are you a crown, perhaps?”

“Just what is a crown, anyway?”

“A crown is a Golem from the specialized crown series. They're ancient machines with unique powers, that stand one or several tiers above the rest. In this world, they are considered the apex of Golem potential...” Elluka leaned in and explained.

Huh, that's pretty wild... As I thought to myself, Est carried on.

“Nia's Golem, Blood Rouge, is one of the crowns. However, we had a clash with another of the crowns, and Rouge was rendered immobile.”

“Tsk... That bastard hit us with a surprise shot... I won't forgive that purple asshole! We'll get them back next time!” I didn't really understand what Nia was yelling about, so I chalked it down to a personal grievance.

I wanted to learn more about the crowns, but that would have to come later.

“All troops assembled, ma'am!” Euni leaned into the room and yelled to us. Est turned to face her in response, seeing the two rows of soldiers ready to mobilize.

“Squad A will standby here in case of attack! Squad B will come with us to save the fortress! We’ll be moving there immediately thanks to our new friend’s magic! Prepare for immediate conflict!”

“YES MA’AM!!!” Est looked over my projected map and pointed at a specific area.

“Can you send us to this mountain area?”

“I can. Will it be Squad B and the rest of us going?”

Based on what I was told, it seemed I’d be bringing along Nia, Est, Euri, Euni, Elluka, Fenrir, and Akagane.

“No, actually. I want Fenrir and Elluka to remain here. Truthfully I want Nia to stay behind, as well...”

“I’ll go!” Nia clenched her fists and spoke resolutely.

“Frankly, you’re more of a liability to us without Rouge.”

“What?! Don’t be so mean! Even without Rouge, I’m tough!”

Are you...? You look kinda frail to me. Man... I might have made a mistake here. I’m fine helping them out if they need me, but they are criminals... I’m not so sure I want to become a wanted man in this world... I guess I can easily escape it by going home, but still... I just need to go unrecognized, I suppose.

That being said, I can’t bring myself to kill someone who probably isn’t even bad. Isn’t there some way I can get through this without fighting? Like sneaking out the Red Cat members, or...

“Map, trigger markers. Knight order in blue. Red Cats in red.”

“Displaying.”

“Whoa! What’s with those colors?”

Several colored markers appeared on the map, surprising Nia and the others. The red dots were practically surrounded by the blue ones. They were losing, little by little.

It was easy for me to use search magic to identify members of Red Cat, and members of the knight order due to their respective outfits.

“The blue markers represent knights from the kingdom. The red markers are your guys. The battle hasn’t started yet, but they’re being circled. I guess I could try plan B...”

“Plan B?” Est didn’t quite understand what I meant.

“If I can ensure the safety of the people inside your base, would you be fine with abandoning it? You said you were planning on moving eventually anyway, right?”

“Hm? Well, it’s not like we have any attachment to that particular base or anything... Did you have something in mind?”

“I was thinking of going inside the fort and personally teleporting every Red Cat member out of there, and send them here. I’m wondering if it’d be okay if I destroyed the fortress in the process.” That would be a perfect pacifistic solution. The knights would just assume they abandoned the place and blew it up.

Why didn't I think of this sooner...? I guess I've been fighting a little much lately. I should be using my head more than my fists.

"Is that really possible?"

"Easily, yes. But I'll need someone to come with me. I don't expect your comrades to believe me if I go alone."

"I'll go!" Nia shot her hand up immediately. I didn't have a problem with it, but I looked towards the others. Est let out a long, drawn-out sigh, and issued a command to her Gollem, Akagane.

"Akagane. Go with Nia. Your current orders are to keep her safe from harm."

The huge red Gollem slowly nodded its head with a mechanical creak. It seemed that, unlike Fenrir, this one couldn't talk. Or maybe it just didn't want to talk. I had no way of telling. It was probably more common to have a non-vocal Gollem, anyway.

Either way, we needed to hurry. We were sitting around chatting while the soldiers were marching onwards. We needed to execute this plan before the battle actually began.

"**[Gate]** ." I opened up a portal next to Nia, who lazily stared at it with curiosity in her eyes. Akagane, on the other hand, slowly and cautiously made its way through. I wondered if it was trying to determine how safe it was before Nia went in. Seeing Akagane's successful trip, Nia followed right after.

"Alright, we're off. We'll try and have everyone back as soon as possible."

"Good luck out there."

Est bowed her head and I walked through the portal, coming out into a forested area. Nia was looking around uneasily, and Akagane was carefully surveying the area.

"Where's the fortress from here, then?"

"A-Ah, well... This way!" Nia began to guide us through the area. After a short while, she stopped and pointed toward the mountainside.

"Look here, you should be able to see it. Right there."

"Huh?" I looked to where she pointed, but could see nothing but rocks and trees. I used **[Long Sense]** to project my field of vision, and saw that there was a fairly rudimentary base built out of logs. It was hidden between the trees. It was well camouflaged, but certainly smaller than I expected. Either way, you wouldn't notice it at a glance.

Frankly, from a distance it couldn't be seen at all.

"Alright, I can see it now. That means we can jump there. Hold on."

"Huh?"

"**[Teleport]** ."

Sango and Kokuyou planted themselves on my head, while Kokugyoku perched on my shoulder. I grabbed Nia and Akagane, and

warped all of us toward the wooden building in the distance.

The men in the area suddenly drew their weapons in surprise, but stopped once they noticed Nia.

“B-Boss?! Why are you here?!”

“A-Ah... I-Is everyone okay?!” Nia looked around uneasily due to the sudden shift in scenery, but quickly called out to ask after everyone. The Red Cat members all came out to greet her after hearing her voice.

“Everyone! We need to group up! Get everyone here, now! We’re escaping from this base, you hear? We need to get out of here!”

I opened up a **[Gate]** next to Nia, and the Red Cat members began filing in one after the other.

Everyone except Nia and Akagane safely made it to the hideout beneath the underground. I used my map to double-check that nobody had been left behind. I also noticed that the blue markers were gradually getting closer.

“Oh boy... The knights are closing in... I need to get rid of this place before they’re close enough to get hurt. Nia, you and Akagane need to go back to Est now. This is where we part.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?!”

“There are things I need to do. I have to be home by tomorrow. I’ll ask you for my reward next time we meet, okay? So I promise we’ll meet again.”

It was possible that I might need to count on them at some point, so I was glad I’d helped them out. This Red Cat group of chivalrous thieves seemed to have some notoriety, so having them on my side was probably a plus.

“...Alright, I understand. Thanks so much for all you’ve done. Next time we meet I’ll introduce you to my Gollem, alright? Rouge is awesome!”

“Haha, I’m sure... Next time maybe I’ll show you my Frame Gear, a special giant Gollem that a person can ride inside.”

“Pfft, this isn’t the time for jokes!” Nia giggled to herself, assuming I was making something up. It wouldn’t be difficult to use **[Storage]** to stash a Frame Gear, so I could probably bring one across to the Reverse World with me... But it would probably cause some kind of international crisis if it was seen.

“Until next time, then. Teach me magic, alright? Later, Touya.”

“Yeah, later. Tell everyone bye from me.”

I waved Nia and Akagane off as they passed through the portal. Now all I had to do was trash the place... Even if it felt like ruining such a well-built building was a waste.

I used **[Invisible]** on myself and then soared up into the air with **[Fly]**. Then, I looked down on the fortress from above, and cast a

spell I'd been wanting to try out.

"Burst forth, Fire! Purgatorial Roar: [Mega Explosion] !" A thunderous roar echoed through the mountain as the fort was blasted to splinters... along with part of the mountain... Whoops...

"...M-My lord, is that not perhaps what they call... overkill?"

"Ah, well... I didn't really expect it to be that strong... B-But this is fine, right?"

Maybe I need to get a handle on my own strength... I do have Divinity boosting me now, as well. I should probably take it slow with the more extreme spells, yeesh...

The surrounding knights flew into an uproar and charged toward the fortress. Well, there weren't any corpses in the area, so the knights would assume the thieves had fled. In fact, the Red Cats were likely fleeing from the underground base right at that moment.

Either way, I'd made quite the detour on my little excursion, but I had also learned some interesting things along the way.

The robot-like thing in Palerius' notebook, for example. I was pretty sure I knew what it was. It had to have been some kind of Golem.

I was beginning to suspect that one or more Gollems, created in this world, developed the ability to travel to another world... The one I lived in. At that point, old man Palerius probably met with them. It was possible that they were the ones that gave him the knowledge about traveling to other worlds.

After all, I knew that there were Gollems capable of speech, so it wasn't impossible for them to teach things. It was also possible that a Golem could've been the one that repaired the world boundary.

From what I understood, the legacy Gollems had special magic-based abilities. And there was a specific sub-type of legacy Gollems, the crown series, that had abilities far beyond even those extremes.

Given that knowledge, it was possible that one of these crowns passed over to the other world five-thousand years ago, and used its insane power to repair the barriers between dimensions.

"I've got nothing to go on but that assumption for now, at least..."

The sun was starting to set, so I decided to do what little things I could do before the morning came.

I landed in the middle of the forest, quite a distance from the soldiers, and undid my invisibility. I had Kougyoku call upon thousands of her bird dependents. We then sent them out to scout the world for map data, and to find a place suitable for hiding out away from others. After all, I needed to find a safe place to build a static portal that could lead back home. I didn't think we'd cover much ground, since we only had until morning, but it was better than nothing.

To be honest, this forest would probably be fine if I just applied a barrier similar to the one Palerius had put around the island. But that would probably cause too much suspicion, and we'd get people trying to investigate the anomalous nature of the place. Ideally I wanted to find a place on the outskirts of civilization, far away from people, and monsters.

After sending off the birds, I soared back into the sky and picked a random direction to fly off into. Gradually the sun set, and the night sky became darker and darker.

Even though it was a gloomy night, and I couldn't even see the light of the moon, my field of vision wasn't too badly affected. I wondered if night vision was another perk of my budding Divinity.

I could see a bright building in the distance. Or rather, it stood out a little bit too much.

"What's this...?"

It was a sparkling whirlpool of neon. Frankly it started hurting my eyes. There were bright, flashing lights all over the place.

Just what kind of gaudy place is this? Is it an amusement park?

"Ca-si-no... Casino... Oh snap, it's a casino!"

There were giant flashing letters advertising exactly what kind of gaudy place this was. I'd landed in some kind of gambling city.

Hmm... I've never gambled before. I mean, I've never been old enough to gamble, you know? It's not like I'm not interested, though.

I guess I have the money for it, so... why not?

"Alright, let's do some gambling."

"You can if you like... But I fear that your fiancées may not approve of this."

"Little Kougyoku iss jussst a sasssy old ssstick in the mud... If you win it big here, darling... You can get lotsss of good pressents' for your girliesss!"

"Mm... It looks pretty fun, Kokuyou is right."

Alright, well... They seem to be down with it. I'm gonna do it! It's an experience at the end of the day.

I puffed up my chest with confidence and stepped into the gambling city.

"G-Gambling sure is scary, huh...?"

I played game after game until the sun came up, and in the end I walked out with nothing.

I should've just used magic to cheat... But they had eyes all over the place... H-How could I let this happen?!

It would appear that I had no talent at all for the art of the gamble.

"A-At least I managed to win that one time..."

I ended up betting more so I could recoup my losses, but as I lost

more and more, that pit only dug itself deeper.

“D-Don’t be dissscouraged, darling...”

“...You really should’ve quit while you were behind. I would’ve.”

“O-Oh well... I guess these things happen.”

“Let’s... Let’s just go home via the divine realm already... I have to give god his souvenir...”

With a heavy heart, I opened up a **[Gate]** to the realm of the gods.

Chapter IV: The Little King and the Prodigious Girl

It had been three days since I came back from the Reverse World. I gave everyone their souvenirs, and right after Leen and Doctor Babylon retreated to the research laboratory. Linze and Fam holed themselves up in the library as well.

That left only Rosetta and Monica working in the garages. They had their mini-bots to help them out, at least.

The two gynoids each picked up a mini-bot and took a look at them.

“So the Golems are kind of like these guys, huh?” The little minibots tilted their head as if to ask “What’s wrong?” Once they were set back down they ran back to join their brethren, dashing in a cheery manner. According to Doc Babylon, they were mindless automatons that obeyed in a similar manner to summoned beasts.

Compared to the Golems, the mini-bots weren’t quite up to spec. The Reverse World seemed to be superior in terms of autonomy.

“My Frame Gear certainly looks nice...” Yumina stood next to me, looking up at the Frame Gear being constructed nearby.

It was incomplete, but you could see it coming together fairly nicely. It was clearly a well-armored silver Frame Gear.

“Did you think of a name for it yet, Touya?”

“Yes, I did. Brunnhilde.” The long-range attacker Frame Gear, Brunnhilde. It was designed to deliver powerful sniper shots from afar. It was outfitted with silver armor, designed to help camouflage it against its surroundings. It was basically what we’d use for a more subtle kind of assault.

“Brunnhilde... Shouldn’t it be you with the Frame Gear named after the country?”

“Ah, it’s just... Everyone else’s Frame Gears are named after the nine warmaidens, right? I think you should have this to complete the set... Besides, Brunnhilde is close to Brunhild, but it’s not quite the same.”

The names of all the Frame Gears were taken from the names of the Valkyries in Richard Wagner’s famous opera, “Der Ring des Nibelungen.”

■ **Brunnhilde**

Yumina's Frame Gear. Sniper type

Primary Color: Silver

■Gerhilde

Elze's Frame Gear. Melee type, specialized in hand-to-hand combat

Primary Color: Red

■Ortlinde

Sue's Frame Gear. Defensive type

Primary Color: Gold

■Waltraute

Lu's Frame Gear. Guerilla-type, specialized in adaptive combat

Primary Color: Green

■Schwertleite

Yae's Frame Gear. Melee type, specialized in swordplay

Primary Color: Purple

■Helmwige

Linze's Frame Gear. Aerial support type

Primary Color: Blue

■Siegrune

Hilde's Frame Gear. Heavyweight melee type, specialized in swordplay

Primary Color: Orange

■Grimgerde

Leen's Frame Gear. Heavy bombardier type

Primary Color: Black

■Rossweisse

Sakura's Frame Gear. Support type, specialized in area-of-effect skills

Primary Color: White

All the knowledge gained from the creation of these Frame Gears would be incorporated into my own personal machine, which was set to be created after Yumina's was done.

It wasn't as if I wasn't capable of fighting on my own, or anything... But going up against Upper Constructs or stronger creatures quickly tired me out. I wanted to have a suitably powerful machine just in case the day came that the Phrase were able to freely pass through the ruined world barrier.

That was why I decided to create the masterwork Frame Gear and have it assigned to me. Plus, to be honest, who wouldn't want their own personal giant robot?

“So, Brunnhilde is equipped with a sniper rifle for long-range attacks, but also has four flying Fragarach blades for mid-range interception. You can also go more covert with this one due to the stealth function built into the armor. Though the armor kind of stands

out a little when it hasn't got its stealth function activated..."

"Y-Yes, it is a tad gaudy."

"Well, this is the best color for getting the most out of the stealth function, so it'll be fine. I'm sure you'll get used to it." It would only stand out at the start of the battle, once it was active it'd blend in really well.

"The other world has something similar to Frame Gears, right?"

"Ehh... They're more like the mini-bots. They're also similar to summoned creatures, in that they obey commands given to them by their masters. There are even some with special, magical powers!"

"I'd like to see them at some point."

"I just need to build a portal door on the other side, then we can come and go as we please. After I do that, I'll take you around the city."

"It's a promise, then." Yumina smiled and wrapped her arms around one of mine.

Still, I had to establish a plot of land in the other world to make a place to house the portal. I definitely needed a few more trips there, it seemed.



"So the matter with Palerius Island is going well. Once the proper proceedings are done, our ship will go out and— Oh, no!"

The king of Lihnea stood up and grumbled. We were at the baseball stadium, watching a match between Lestia and Regulus. Regulus had just scored a double.

It was a friendly match since we'd just got done with our alliance meeting. The leaders were relaxing here and there, taking in the game.

Apparently, the king of Lihnea was good friends with the knight king of Lestia, so he was supporting the Lestian team.

The king of Lestia himself was down at the bench, since he was the team's coach. The ladies of the alliance, those being the Ramissh pope and the Roadmare doge, were hanging out with my fiancées back at the castle.

"Don't be naive... Regulus won't fall for that, I'm sure. I wonder if they'll win or lose during this next inning..."

"No, you need to keep an eye on the pitcher. He hasn't changed his speed at all." The king of Belfast and the emperor of Refreese were both looking down on the pitch with folded arms. Boisterous laughter came out of their mouths as they made their own personal predictions.

You guys sound a little ominous there...

The king of Lihnea headed over to console the Lestian team.

It seemed like Cloud and Reinhard had become quite good friends.

“Matches are a good place to vent out stress and have a grand old time! It’s just as the lad, er, Touya, said! This kinda sport is a cultural exchange! Bwahaha!”

The beastking merrily spoke as he sat in the VIP area, eyes completely transfixed on the game. His leopard ears were twitching with anticipation.

“There’s not just baseball, you know? We could do other sports. Oh, I wonder if we could organize something like the Olympic games...”

“The old lipid game? What’s that?”

“Ah, no. The Olympic games. It’s an event that happens every couple years. Teams from various countries around the world gather together and play sports and games over the course of several days. It’s a way of determining the best athletes in the world. Like uh... the winner of the Olympic baseball game would be the world’s best baseball team.”

“Hoho! Best in the world, eh? Sounds good to me! I’m interested in this!”

The world wasn’t quite unified or globalized enough for the Olympics yet, though. Many of the countries wouldn’t be ready for it, and there was still a lot of poverty worldwide, as well as the risk of magical beasts and monsters. Hell, there were even areas of the world with dangerous bandit gangs or freaky cults. We’d have to make the planet a safer place first.

Yulong and Sandora were gone, so that prevented any threat of a large-scale world war, but the petty criminals who had been kept in check by those two nations were now free to run rampant.

Yulong’s assassins, for example, became contract killers, robbers, or thieves. Meanwhile, those that used to capture slaves for Sandora ended up turning to other black market pursuits.

And now the ones that had to deal with them were the countries affected. In a sense, I had destroyed two large problems and spread several small problems across the map. That was why I was more than prepared to fully co-operate in the event that any of these criminals became a major threat.

“That reminds me, lad. You showed us that uh... cully rice, right? It was really, really good. I’d like to see more of that stuff in Mismede, but the rice can only be grown in Eashen, right?”

The meal known as “cully” originated in Mismede in this world. They didn’t have access to rice, so they ate it by soaking bread in it and eating it alongside the bun. Then, when I “came up with” the idea of adding rice to it, it became a taste sensation. When the meal finally got to Mismede, people couldn’t get enough of the stuff.

“I have a contact in the upper echelon of Eashen right now. I’ve

asked him if he can see about exporting rice to Mismede. If we could send a few Eashenese farmers over, perhaps they could start cultivating the stuff in Mismede as well.”

Mismede’s climate was a lot hotter than Brunhild’s, but rice could still be grown there. After all, there was the Great Gau River as a freshwater source. The only foreseeable issue I could think of was dangerous insects from the Sea of Trees or the possibility of magical beasts attacking the paddy.

Then again, such risks could happen in any kind of farmland, and I was sure that professional farmers knew more about it than I did. In the worst case scenario, I could just ask Uncle Kousuke for help. He was the god of agriculture after all.

Eashen was still recovering from the incident with the monkey... or rather, Hideyooshi. Ieyahsu had settled in at the center of Eashen’s government to take care of affairs, and they’d finally managed to set up the exporting of goods.

In fact, Brunhild was set to harvest its own batch of rice in the fall. I was looking forward to it.

Oh, three outs.

Lestia’s team was definitely more offensively-oriented than the other team.

Lestia was a country of knights, so it made sense that they’d have keen eyes. Still, what they had in finesse they didn’t quite have in brute strength, so there were no heavy hitters amongst them. They didn’t take risks with potentially dangerous hits, either. They just took shots they were sure of.

Regulus had a pretty balanced team, so their players were pretty versatile. Their lineup was good enough to match with any opposing team, honestly.

I felt a little sorry for the king of Lihnea, but it seemed like Regulus had the best team.

The audience was going wild for the match, which was good. The people in the stands were mostly people from Brunhild, but it hadn’t taken them long to decide which teams they each preferred.

This world didn’t have much in the way of fun ways to pass the time, so they were just enjoying the game itself instead of getting too heavily into the competitive aspect.

Even if their favorite team lost, I noticed everyone in the audience seeing off the winners with smiles and a full round of applause.

They never once jeered, threw anything, or generally got angry if their favorite players messed up. I was glad to see good sportsmanship from everyone in the area.

The players were all good sports too, but that kind of made sense. Their main job was working in the knight order, after all. They

weren't professional baseball players who relied on it for income. That was why even though they were official national teams, the games always had a very casual vibe.

I was just happy to have created a space where everyone could enjoy themselves.

I looked over and suddenly saw Sue barreling toward the VIP box.
Hm? What's got her in such a hurry?

She whizzed past the men guarding the box and flung open the door before yelling at the top of her voice.

"Touya! We have a child!"

All the world leaders in the VIP box suddenly turned in place and stared right at me.

What? Hold on. Yumina said Sue hadn't even started her period yet... No, wait... I haven't even touched Sue, what the hell?!



“Okay just, hold on a second, Sue. What do you mean by child, exactly?”

It can't be mine... right? That makes no sense.

“Father and mother's child! I'm gonna have a little brother or sister!”

Oh... OKAY. Phew... G-Geez... I don't even know what... Oh man...

I let out a heavy sigh of relief as the king of Belfast walked up to Sue.

“Sue? Al's going to have another child?”

“It's true, it's true! Mr. Raul said so!” Sue was referring to Doctor Raul, the royal physician of Belfast. That meant it was probably true. It seems like Sue learned the news through the Gate Mirrors in Brunhild castle, and then ran straight here.

That meant that the king of Belfast would get a new niece or nephew. If it was a boy, then that kid would become the head retainer of Prince Yamato when he ascended to the throne.

Still, if Duke Ortlinde was going to have a kid... then there was only one explanation. It had to be thanks to the item I'd loaned him.

The Elfrau royal family had granted me a special artifact after killing the Snorra Wolf Behemoth.

The artifact was said to make it easier for women to become pregnant if they wore it during sex, so I lent it to Duke Ortlinde to see whether or not the claim actually held up... and apparently, it worked.

I waited for the game to end then sent all the world leaders home. I sent Sue, the king, and his guardsmen to Duke Ortlinde's home with a **[Gate]**. Then, I sent a message addressed to the duke along with Sue, asking him to return the artifact now that he was done with it.

I guess the Doctor's vision of the future is becoming a lot more clear each day, huh...? But... nine kids? Maybe more than nine? That's just... insane.

Well, I was marrying nine women, so it was just one of those things. I guess in the end, I had to be prepared to give each of them at least one child. But if I married them at eighteen, that meant that I'd be a dad of nine by the age of nineteen... Oh, no, there'd still be a few more years before I married Sue... But the thought of eight children hardly made me feel any better than nine.

H-Hrm... For some reason, the thought of this is a lot scarier than the Phrase ever was. Honestly, I'm gonna end up having a ridiculous amount of kids... Though they're not all going to be born at the same time, right? It's not like I'll be sleeping with them all at the same time or anything... Right?



“Good morning, Touya.”

“...Morning, Yumina. What are you doing here?” I woke up from my slumber to see a heterochromia-eyed girl straddling the blanket I was laying under.

“...Didn’t I lock the door from the inside last night?”

“You did. I just unlocked it.”

I stared at Yumina as if to ask her how the hell she managed to do something like that, but she just winked back and gave me an angelic smile. “It’s one of my seven special abilities, that’s all.”



What kind of answer is that?! Come on! And what are the other six supposed to be?! I didn't exactly mind being woken up by a cute girl, but it was definitely bad for my heart. Plus, Yumina looked totally innocent and cute in her pajamas, so it was an extra-powerful attack. It'd been two years since we met, and she'd certainly grown. She was definitely a lot more feminine in terms of physical appearance, but she didn't stop surprising me with weird stuff like this, either.

Either way, she was still only fourteen. I didn't think doing anything beyond cuddling was quite appropriate.

"Don't worry, Touya. I've seen your sleeping face a lot, so I'll be satisfied with just this for now."

"Wait, what?! How long have you been in here?"

I didn't even notice you... I asked Yumina to leave the room and quickly got changed.

Before breakfast, I walked out into the training grounds and saw Yae, Hilde, and Elze doing their regular morning training sessions.

I couldn't see Lu anywhere, so she was probably in the kitchen making breakfast. That meant we'd be having a Japanese-styled meal... I was looking forward to that.

"Yo, Touya. Morning to you. Hey, would you mind sparring with me a little?" I was greeting everyone when suddenly Moroha appeared from nowhere.

Damn it... I should've been keeping a better eye out.

"...Yeah, alright. But could you go easy for once?"

"Hmph, really now? Tsk, fine. Let's just go at it, without magic or divinity, got it?" Elze volunteered to be the referee, so I took a wooden sword in hand and got ready to clash with my sister. Even though the swords were wooden, they'd been enchanted to have enhanced durability. The first strike would've broken them to pieces otherwise.

They were definitely strong enough to shatter bones, but I definitely didn't think neither I nor my sister would take enough damage to break anything if we managed to hit one another. But hey, at the end of the day it would still hurt, so I didn't want her to land a shot on me.

"Oof!"

Moroha swiped her leg and knocked me off balance, she immediately followed the strike up with a forward thrust, which made me stumble backward. She didn't waste a single motion.

I rolled to the side, parried the incoming thrust, and then steadied myself with my arm before jumping back to my feet. *Come on! Gimme a break here... Didn't I say to go easy on me, Moroha?!*

It felt like she was toying with me, like a cat with its prey. I glared

at her as my grip on the sword tightened.

“My liege, are you alright?”

“Y-Y-Yep... J-Just fine...”

Kohaku gently pawed at me as pain coursed through my entire body.

She didn’t go easy on me at all... Her status as a god really wasn’t just for show...

I used **[Healing]** and **[Refresh]** to restore myself back to peak condition. Without that magic, I wouldn’t have been able to move an inch. Tussling with Moroha was a dangerous game indeed. I was thoroughly defeated, even with my abnormally powerful body. It took her less than three minutes to completely wear me down.

Moroha had already moved on to her next prey, the knights training on the field.

All things considered, I was glad I got such a rigorous workout before breakfast.

I came to the dining room and found Linze, Lu, and a half-asleep Leen having their morning meal.

My fiances and I all had errands to attend to, so it wasn’t common that we’d all be around the breakfast table at the same time. Sakura, for example, ate with her mother Fiana about three or four days a week.

The breakfast was, as I’d expected, Lu’s Japanese-style feast. We had miso soup with daikon radish, rice, grilled fish from the dungeon islands, fried eggs, chopped burdock, tofu, and various pickled veggies.

I wondered if Lu was trying to make food that I specifically enjoyed. She was definitely getting better at Japanese-styled stuff, even going so far as to question Eashenese natives about their traditional meals. I was a little worried about getting fat thanks to all her good stuff.

I finished breakfast and was about to go take care of some paperwork when my smartphone suddenly started ringing.

Huh... That’s weird. The caller was Reinhard, my future brother-in-law. Or more formally, the knight king of Lestia.

“Sup.”

“Oho! Grand Duke! I’m really sorry to bother you, but I need your consultation on something... More specifically, the king of Lihnea.”

“What about him?” Reinhard, Knight King of Lestia, and Cloud, King of Lihnea, were close friends. It was likely due to the fact that they were around the same age.

Cloud never had much in the way of friends when he was growing up. He was constantly tormented by Zabune, the fake heir to the throne. Reinhard didn’t really have any people he could casually hang

around with either, mostly due to the fact that he was expected to act a certain way as a prince. They had similar personalities, so it was nice to see their friendship slowly blossom.

I was curious about what the Knight King wanted to talk about in regards to his friend, however.

“I’m resting right now, but I’ll head over in ten minutes, alright? I’ll meet you at the Lestian Castle Gate.”

“Very well. Thank you.”

I ended the call, quickly flitted through some documents, and told Kousaka where I was headed. I considered bringing Hilde along with me, but I felt like this was probably a man-to-man talk about friends and royalty, so I didn’t think she’d have much of a place in the conversation.

I used a **[Gate]** to reach the Lestian Castle, and two knights were already there to greet me. They led me into the castle, and I eventually came to a casual sitting room. Reinhard was relaxing inside.

“Hey there, sorry for the short notice. I didn’t really know who else to talk to about this, that’s all...” Reinhard stood up from the couch he was lounging on and greeted me. I didn’t really mind the short notice, it sounded to me like it was a conversation more serious than a phone call could cover.

Reinhard patted the couch space next to him so I sat down. He then ordered the knights to leave the room and began talking about what was troubling him.

“You recall that Palouf and Lihnea were once on the brink of war, yes?”

“Oh yeah, that was the whole thing with Prime Minister Wardack’s plan. The situation was stressful for a while, but when Cloud ascended to the throne he managed to negotiate peace. Is there something wrong over there?”

The largest island in this world was the north-western landmass known as Palnea. It was divided into two territories. Palouf was in the north, and Lihnea was in the south. They’d been at a stalemate for years and weren’t actively warring.

The northern nation of Palouf was cursed with harsh winters, which affected their crop harvest. They’d also had various misfortunes in regards to a succession crisis and their king dying. Wardack, the former Prime Minister of Lihnea, attempted to use these various weaknesses to swiftly conquer Palouf and take its territory.

We managed to intervene and avoid the war, all while eliminating Wardack as a threat. Then, Cloud rose as the new king of Lihnea and managed to successfully negotiate peaceful relations with Palouf.

“The relations with Palouf are still going well. Their king died,

and his son was crowned, which settled most of the domestic issues. Trade is also proving favorable. But there is a small matter of concern..."

"What's that?"

"The late king of Palouf had two children. The first is Princess Lucienne Dia Palouf, and the second is her younger brother, Ernest Din Palouf. The princess, Lucienne, is getting along rather well with King Cloud... One might even say that sparks are flying, you understand?"

"Ohoho, I get it..."

Guess he's about old enough for that to start happening, huh? He's sure come far since that idiot step-brother of his was leading him around... I hope he can really enjoy his youth going forward. He's a real great guy.

Still, that begged the question as to what the problem was here.

"The issue is with Prince Ernest. He's inheriting the throne, but he's a lad of only ten years old. He has a long way to go, and he's being supported by his uncle and the royal retainers... However, he's very clingy when it comes to his sister."

"Ah... So he's cautious of the king of Lihnea because he doesn't want his precious sister to get taken away?"

"Ahaha... Yes, definitely. It's not like I can't understand his feelings, given your relationship to my own sister. But for now, that's how he feels." Reinhard smiled at me wryly as he said that.

In my opinion, the little boy wasn't exactly in the wrong here. His dad had died, he was suddenly thrust into a position of great responsibility, and now he feels like he's losing his sister. That kind of thing would be almost impossible for a ten-year-old to deal with.

"So what have the Palouf retainers said?"

"They favor the relationship between the two. They think it would be a perfect way to solidify bonds between Lihnea and Palouf."

"And what about the two themselves?"

"King Cloud would absolutely take Princess Lucienne as his queen without question. The princess, on the other hand, is a little..."

"Little what? Reluctant?"

"Not exactly. It's more that she's conflicted on leaving her little brother behind. She's nineteen right now, which poses a problem. If she waits for young Ernest to become an adult, she'll end up marrying very late. The king of Lihnea also needs to secure an heir in his young age. If he's left waiting too long, then he may have to look elsewhere." Prince Ernest, or rather, King Ernest would be considered an adult at the age of fifteen, which would mean there'd be another five years to go... That would leave the princess waiting until she turned twenty-four.

In this world, women typically married around the age of twenty

at the latest. In terms of royalty and nobility, that age was typically a lot younger. Engagements at the age of thirteen and fourteen were commonplace. Twenty-four was considered an abnormally late age to be married, especially for a princess, so it was quite a sensitive issue.

Princess Lucienne once had a fiancée amongst the nobles of Refreeze, but he died of sickness before they even met. After that, the matter of her father's death came about, which further delayed marriage proceedings for her.

King Cloud was apparently fine with waiting the five years until Ernest became an adult, but as the ruler of the nation, there were countless political pressures on his shoulders. It simply wasn't a decision he alone could make.

Not to mention the fact that Cloud was the only remaining heir to Lihnea's royal family. It was likely that the retainers and nobles of the country were demanding a fresh heir. I was also sure that many highborn families would be offering their daughters to him in an attempt to connect their families to the royal one.

Then again, this was a polygamous world. It was still possible he could take on one of those noble girls and then marry the princess later on.

"You're probably thinking he could take on a noble girl and then marry the princess later on. That would not do. A girl from a highborn family as the first wife, and a legitimate princess as the second? The people of Palouf would consider it a slight against their national pride. If the king of Lihnea was in a similar position to you and was engaged to many princesses, then perhaps the situation would be different, though..."

Whoops. Guess I picked up most of the available royals.

I didn't really care about first duchesses and second duchesses or whatever when it came to marrying me. But in the eyes of the world, Yumina would probably be the "First Queen" while Lu took the position of "Second Queen." Hilde would probably be third, come to think of it.

Elze, Linze, and Yae were all of common blood, so Sue would come next. Then Leen, then Sakura. Sakura was the daughter of the Xenoahs overlord and had his blood in her veins, but she was an illegitimate child. That fact was also hidden from public knowledge. Then again, Leen held very high standing with the fairies, so it was possible that she outclassed Lu's noble status...

Either way, I really had no intentions of ranking my fiancées by importance. I loved them all in their own ways.

That probably wouldn't stop other countries from speculating, though.

"Well, I think I have the basic gist of the situation. But what do I

do about it?"

"If I'm honest? It's King Ernest... He's, well... a fan of yours, Grand Duke. He doesn't really bother much with King Cloud, but when he hears stories about you, I'm told that his attention is absolutely rapt. I suppose it's only natural for a child to idolize their heroes, though."

"...You kidding me?"

Ugh... This is little conflicting... I'm glad the kid likes me, but... I'm hardly doing things that heroes do... It wasn't like I was going out looking for danger or committing heroic feats. For the most part, I've just been responding to the world around me... It was pretty draining. Do I seriously have fans out there? Why would they care about my mundane exploits...?

"So let me get this straight... I think I've got an idea of what you want here..."

"It's as you may have guessed, yes. Grand Duke, I wish for you to speak with King Ernest. I wish for you to convince him of the best path for Lihnea and Palouf's collective future."

Well, I can't say I'm surprised.

I was fairly sure that the Palouf government would want the relationship to progress to marriage, but obviously, a little boy losing his older sister to another nation would be potentially traumatic.

I didn't want to forcibly change his mind or anything, if I could have him happily send his sister off, that's what I wanted to happen. After all, he was only a little boy.

"For the time being, we should go the king of Lihnea and hear what he has to say. I'm sure he's got his own opinion, right?" I didn't want to meddle in his business as an outsider to the whole deal, anyway. If he didn't want my help, I wasn't going to butt in and give it.

I picked up my smartphone and called King Cloud. He'd just had a meeting canceled, so he was free to meet with us. Just as I set off to go, the knight king remembered he had some business to attend to, so I ended up going alone. He apologized but said that he hoped I could help the situation... He must have really been good friends with Cloud.

I opened up a **[Gate]** and hopped through, much to the surprise of one of the guardsmen.

Whoopsie, should've warped somewhere without any people.

Another guard was expecting my arrival and sent a message to the castle. Eventually, I was greeted by an old fellow I hadn't seen in quite some time.

"My, my... If it isn't the grand duke of Brunhild. What brings you here?"

"Ah, Marquis Koupe! Or should I say Prime Minister Koupe... It's good to see you."

His body was definitely tough, almost as if it didn't belong to such an old man at all. He was clearly hanging on to life tooth and nail to ensure that he could see a fully revitalized and restored Lihnea before he died.

"I was asked by the knight king of Lestia to help with a matter... One pertaining to King Cloud and a neighboring princess."

"Oh, I see... Yes. That's certainly been a matter of interest. The king definitely hasn't shown any sign of choosing another woman as his bride... I suppose that's likely the fault of the previous king, though. Young King Cloud believes that a marriage founded on anything other than love would lead only to misery."

That certainly made sense. I could see why he thought that way.

Cloud's dad, the previous king of Lihnea, was in a loveless marriage to the former Queen Dacia. That ultimately led to his downfall, as she deliberately deceived him and began to manipulate his life. Cloud probably didn't want to repeat the sins of the past, and embroil himself in a political marriage.

That being said, he was a king... He needed to consider his country over his own feelings sometimes. Even so, that was pretty harsh.

From what I had heard, the former King Schlaf and his wife, Erya, were living happily together after the throne was handed to Cloud.

I wasn't going to get anywhere without talking to Cloud first. The prime minister guided me into the castle's reception room, where I could finally talk to Cloud about it.

"I wish to marry Princess Lucienne and make her my queen. However, the young king's feelings are important as well. I do not wish to wound them. Waiting for him to grow is quite fine by me."

"What about your retainers, though?"

"King Cloud... Though it may not be my place to say, there is certainly a lot of pressure coming from local nobility these days... Our government is primarily focused on providing an heir, should the worst come to pass..." Koupe spoke, stony-faced and almost sorrowful. The situation was pretty rough overall. Cloud didn't have any brothers or sisters, so the Lihnea royal bloodline would die out if Cloud were to die someday. Personally, I didn't think it was that big of a deal. Cloud was really young, so he wasn't going anywhere... Barring any unfortunate accidents, at least.

"Couldn't we just formally announce their engagement?"

"The engagement has been made, but we cannot possibly announce it and say that the wedding will be in five years. There would be an uproar. The reason would be discovered eventually, and sour rumors about the young king of Palouf would begin to spread... They might even call him selfish for wishing to stay with his sister.

That would cause our relations with them to sour, most certainly..." Koupe once again spoke up with a solemn expression. He wasn't wrong, but at the same time, the king was basically a child. I didn't want to think that the world would call him selfish when he was just a little boy.

"And what about the retainers in Palouf? Do they support the union?"

"Yes, they do. There's only one family that speaks out against it, and that's because they wish for the princess to marry one of their own."

Hmm... I wonder if that family might have been influencing the kid... Maybe they're telling him that his sister will live a bad life in Lihnea or something...

To be honest, the reputation of the Lihnean royal family wasn't all that good. Prince Zabune and his behavior had killed it. It was possible that people thought badly of Cloud just because of familial association with Zabune. But then again, Lihnea did issue a statement showing that there was no blood relation between Cloud and that moron, so that shouldn't have been an issue at all.

"Hrm... Well, I get where you're coming from, Cloud. I'd like to meet with the king of Palouf if that's alright. Can you guys arrange that?"

"Oh? Very well, that may prove helpful. In fact, I think he'd love to meet you. He's quite the fan of yours, Grand Duke."

It was a little bit funny, yet weird at the same time... The idea of one nation's monarch being the avid fan of another world leader. I wanted to meet with him and use that chance to persuade him to let his sister go. It'd definitely be good for him and his country if she had some independence.

Plus, I didn't want him getting too attached to her... There was a risk that his dependency on her could grow over the five or so years.

Welp, guess I gotta figure out the solution to this one... Good grief.



"I-I-It's n-nice to meet you, G-Grand Duke! I-I'm Ernest Din Palouf, K-King of Palouf! O-Oh gosh, I said it... Oh man..."

I met the little boy in the Palouf castle courtyard. He stammered out his sentence and then reeled backward, wheezing. It almost seemed like talking to me took everything he had. He seemed incredibly tense.

"It's a pleasure, Your Majesty. I'm the grand duke of Brunhild, Mochizuki Touya. Please forgive me for the sudden visit. I'm very pleased to meet you."

"N-No! No! D-Don't worry about it!" As I made my greeting, the

little king started shaking his head frantically. He looked terribly flustered. All of his reactions were incredibly child-like.

He was ten years old, which put him at just a bit younger than Sue. They were around similar heights. He had neat, blonde hair that was perfectly trimmed. He also wore a blinding white cape and some ill-fitting fancy garments beneath it. Honestly, the look didn't suit him. He looked like a little doll someone had dressed up all fancy.

I'd brought Elze and Linze with me, and they introduced themselves to him. He wasn't quite as flustered as he was when greeting me, but he certainly seemed a little out of his depth.

I decide to bring the twins with me for a fairly good reason. The Silhoueska twins had a lot of little cousins, and they'd often bicker and squabble. Elze and Linze were good at handling little kids, so I thought they'd be the perfect two to bring over for support.

I'd initially considered bringing one of my sisters, but that would've ended in tears.

"The king of Palouf has been looking forward to meeting you, Grand Duke. He's heard a lot from me, after all."

King Cloud stood next to me and spoke up, causing the little king to turn bright red in the cheeks. He quickly hid behind a woman who stood beside him.

The woman smiled gently and bowed her head.

"I'm sorry, dear Grand Duke. He's a tad shy around strangers... Please don't think him rude."

"It's not a problem."

The woman was Princess Lucienne Dia Palouf. She was elder sister to the king of Palouf, and King Cloud's beloved. Her hair was blonde, just like her brother's. She wore it long and wavy. Her eyes were a beautiful jade green. If I was being honest, she wasn't exactly the kind of person you would call beautiful at a glance. She definitely had a calming, gentle atmosphere to her, however.

She wasn't pretty as a rose and didn't stand out like a sunflower, and she definitely didn't have the refined grace of a Lily. I guess if she were a plant she'd be a... dandelion? She was very plain. She had that kind of girl-next-door charm. She wouldn't turn any heads when she walked around a crowd, but she was sweet.

"Come on, now... Didn't you have something to ask the grand duke?"

"Hmm?"

The little king timidly walked up to me at his sister's urging. I wondered what he wanted.

"U-Uhm... C-Could I maybe see the big soldier man?!"

"...The big what now? Oh! You must mean a Frame Gear. I could show you... But is it alright to make one appear here?"

I didn't want to suddenly make a giant robot appear in the castle courtyard of another nation, so I turned my gaze toward the royal retainers as if to ask permission.

One of them started to walk a little closer. He was a calm-looking man who seemed to be in his fifties, he was clad in a white robe. I wasn't quite sure who he was, exactly.

"That's Donovan Rembrandt. He's a duke regent. He's the younger brother of the former king, so he's the current king's uncle..." I was saved. Thankfully, Linze had recognized my confusion and whispered the answer to me. Even if I learned stuff, now and then I got a little forgetful... There were a lot of names and faces in this world, after all. I needed to get better at that.

"I don't mind it. If King Ernest wishes for it, then by all means, please show him the giant warrior. I'd rather like to see myself..." Rembrandt smiled, his robe crinkling a bit as he nodded his head. My permission granted, I snapped my finger and a portal opened above my head.

An enormous tremor rumbled through the ground as the gigantic mech landed on the ground and shook the courtyard. It was a Chevalier, I didn't think there was any point in bringing out any of the special ones.

"Woooooow!" The little king stared up at the Frame Gear with stars in his eyes.

I used my smartphone to make the Chevalier kneel down and open up its cockpit hatch. The wire hooks that allowed one to climb up there slowly descended.

"Would you like to sit up in the cockpit? We won't be able to move around, but I can show you inside."

"Ah...! Y-Yes please!"

I carried the little king in my arms and ascended up to the cockpit. He sat down in the main seat and grabbed the control systems, his little head bobbing around with child-like wonder.

Heh... I guess little kids in this world love giant robots too...

"So this is how you beat those gross crystal things and the big Behemoth guys?! I bet I could do it if I was riding one of these!"

"Mmm... Don't take this personally, but I don't think you can pilot one of these just yet. It takes a lot of training to become a proper Frame Gear pilot. You need more than basic piloting, too. You need to have some kind of combat experience to do well in it."

"Aw..." Frankly, the king of Palouf looked like a meek kid. He seemed like the type who stayed inside and read books instead of playing outside.

He was a king, so it wasn't like he had to go out very often, and it wasn't necessary for him to be especially tough. I still believed it'd be

better if he was able to defend himself, though. My grandpa was the one who taught me how to look after myself... It was pretty rough.

“Grand Duke... Isn’t it frightening to hurt others? Don’t you get scared when others hate you or come after you for things you did? I think it’s really scary... Whether I’m hurting or being hurt.”

“Well, I agree. I’d like to get through things without hurting people. But there are things I need to protect, you know? I’d be more scared if I failed at doing that. If you don’t have strength when you have to fight, then you can’t do anything... And I think you can’t get through life like that. You have something you want to protect, don’t you?”

“Mhm...” The boy looked down and nodded a little. He was looking through the monitor display at his sister, who was chatting casually to King Cloud.

“She means a lot to you, doesn’t she?”

“...Yeah. I really want her to be happy. I know King Cloud wants to make her his queen, too... But I get scared, you know? I don’t want my sister to go away... I don’t know if I can be king if she isn’t here to help me.”

Well I’ll be damned, this kid’s more attentive than I gave him credit for. He’s a little more mature than he looks, at least.

He was probably uneasy due to a lack of self-confidence, and I was hardly in a position to help him that way. He was a child, and it was normal for a child to be insecure. A king couldn’t afford that, sadly.

I could’ve easily solved the problem by connecting Lihnea and Palouf’s royal castles with a permanent **[Gate]** that only Princess Lucienne could enter, but that would cause problems.

The two nations were definitely friendly these days, but they had a long history of small-scale conflicts and skirmishes, one that spanned hundreds of years. If it became public knowledge that Princess Lucienne could freely pass through to either nation in a matter of seconds, then they’d be in big trouble.

It was possible that rumors would begin that she was spying for one of the countries or something like that. Brunhild had plenty of rumors, so I couldn’t discount the possibility of it happening here.

The real issue here was teaching the little king how to be more independent, but I didn’t think I was close enough to him to broach that kind of subject.

He had a lot of retainers he could rely on, at least, so they could probably handle most affairs when he was too shy. He was probably just adjusting to life as a king, and all the meetings and new people that position brought. At the very least, he seemed to trust his Uncle Rembrandt who was standing as Regent for the time being.

If he started believing in himself a little more, I had no doubt that he'd become a capable king.

"Hey, do you have any kind of specialty? Are you good at magic or maybe swordplay?"

"U-Uhm, well... I'm not very good at using weapons... a-and I only have the aptitude for one element..." The boy's shoulders sagged slightly as he muttered.

Aw crap! I might have just gone and damaged his confidence! I started thinking about how to make him feel better when the boy suddenly turned his gaze to the camera feed again.

"Oh..."

"Hm?"

In response to his murmuring, I turned to see what he was looking at. He seemed to be looking at Duke Rembrandt, and a small girl standing by his side.

Hmm... Was she always there? Actually, why's she glaring up here so intensely?

"Who's the little lady?"

"Uhm, she's from my uncle's... uhm, Duke Rembrandt's house... H-Her name is Rachael... A-And she might be my fiancée? Sh-She's a candidate, at least."

Ohoho... So even a little guy like this can score a fiancée, huh...? Well, I guess he is royalty so it's not that out of place... Still, getting engaged to your cousin? Well, I guess I'm not gonna judge.

The girl on the monitor had blonde, wavy hair held back with a black hairband. She actually strongly resembled a younger version of Lucienne. Looking between the two one might think they were sisters. They were cousins, after all.

They definitely carried different auras, however. Lucienne had a warm-hearted nature to her, while Rachael seemed incredibly sharp-edged. The air around her was straight-up tense. Not to mention the fact that she was glaring right up at the cockpit with her hands on her hips.

"How old is she, exactly?"

"S-Same age as me..." She was even younger than Sue, but the intensity in her eyes was something else... Willful, tomboyish, brash... Seemed like she was all of those things and more, just at a glance.

"Rachael's really cool... She can use four magic elements, and she can even beat grown-ups in sword fighting... Th-They were calling her a, uh, prodigy... A once in a lifetime kind of person..."

That certainly sounded impressive. It was probably her prodigious nature combined with her noble blood that made her a candidate to marry the king. Given such traits, it was no surprise that she seemed so intense, it would've been strange for her to seem like a normal little

girl, even. However...

“Why is she glaring up here...?”

“Ah... Uhm... th-that’s my fault. I-I was planning to have tea with her today... b-but when I heard you were visiting, uhm... I-I canceled...”

Wh-What?! Oh no, then she’s looking up here like that because she’s angry! She’s probably angry at me because I’m the reason for it, too! Alright... Think here, Touya... She’ll get even angrier if we keep staying up here, so it’s time to go back down...

The girl narrowed her eyes and stomped her foot into the ground. She looked really damn mad. We descended to the ground again with the wire hook, at which point the young girl began a quick walk in our direction. She stood in front of me, delicately pinched the hem of her skirt, and briskly curtsayed. She certainly knew her manners.

“It is a pleasure to meet you, Grand Duke. My name is Rachael Rembrandt of the Rembrandt household, and I am King Ernest’s fiancée.”

“Oh, how polite. It’s a pleasure.”

Just calling yourself fiancée, huh? Ernest said candidate... Still, I guess your little mind’s already made up.

“Please forgive us for failing to provide a warm enough welcome, but you did arrive rather quickly. In the future, perhaps you could go by standard procedure and schedule a meeting with some leeway.”

“Ah... Ahaha... Y-Yes, I’ll be sure to do that next time.”

She was smiling, but I could see the poison on her tongue. She was absolutely angry with me. She was probably upset that I’d suddenly butted in on the afternoon date she was looking forward to... Guess prodigy or not, she was still a little girl.

“R-Rachael... Y-You should speak a little more...”

“Oh? You’re siding with the grand duke, Ernie?”

“U-Uhm... n-not exactly, but...”

Oh boy... If these two get married, I can already tell who’s gonna be wearing the pants in that relationship. Maybe she’s the reason the little guy’s so spineless.

She was definitely the textbook definition of a pushy rich girl. I didn’t exactly want her trampling all over the king of Palouf.

She frowned quietly before dusting her hands together and turning to face me once more.

“Well then, if I am correct, you are a Gold-ranked adventurer, are you not? I would very much like you to show me.”

“Excuse me?”

“I would like you to display this alleged strength of yours that is so fondly spoken of in rumor. Would you care to oblige?”

The girl began to grin menacingly toward me as if she were

issuing a challenge.

She's not seriously trying to pick a fight, is she?



"I didn't really expect this to happen today... Are you sure you're fine with this?" I was walking to the Palouf Knight's Training Grounds with Duke Rembrandt when I asked him if he thought this was alright.

Honestly, I wanted to know what Rachael's dad truly thought about the idea of me fighting her.

"Mmm... I think this is quite fine. She's a very strong girl, though any father would speak well of his child. That being said, her strength has given rise to arrogance as of late. I'd very much appreciate it, Grand Duke, if you could break her spirit a little. I think it would be better for her in the long run to suffer some humiliation." I wondered if the other knights had just been going easy on her due to her young age and noble blood, but apparently, that wasn't the case at all.

It seemed that this world, just like my home, had prodigies as well. One of the biggest things to look out for with prodigious kids is their egos. You didn't want to risk them becoming overconfident.

What can start as simple confidence can very easily mutate into arrogance or even disdain. Then again, the opposite was also an issue. The young king had little to no confidence in himself.

The duke himself didn't seem to have an issue with the fight, but... Beating up on a little kid would probably make me look bad. At the same time, I could hardly afford to lose on purpose. I'd look worse!

"You okay, Touya?"

"Yeah, I guess... I don't really have a choice here. Did you see the look on her face? She seemed pretty damn self-assured."

"Little kids always have that period where they think they're the best... Even I had something like that." Elze muttered quietly. I could definitely imagine her being like that. Linze suddenly let out a gentle sigh.

"You were definitely like that for quite a while, sis... I could hardly even keep up with you..."

"Ahaha... Well, like I said, most kids have that kinda thing, right? I bet you had a period of time where you acted funny too, right Touya?"

"...No comment." I knew if I lied Elze would be able to see right through me. I didn't want anyone to know about my edgy phase...

"Still, a confident kid can still be capable... But that doesn't mean she's not vulnerable. Make sure she learns during the fight with you, alright? Just don't lose, and don't try to make it look like it was close. You might feed into her ego."

Mm... I guess... But I don't wanna completely thrash her. She's still a little girl, I don't wanna make her cry.

We arrived at the field and found Rachael already doing her warm-up routine. She'd changed into a tracksuit-like training outfit and was swinging her wooden sword around. She looked extremely enthusiastic.

Welp. There's nothing else for it... Even if it makes me look bad, I can't hold back. It's time to dunk on a literal child. Her dad said I can, so it's fine, right?!

Still... She's a little girl... I'll try my best not to actually injure her.

The training field was surrounded by a magical barrier that prevented magical attacks from escaping, so the audience wasn't at risk.

I headed toward Rachael and picked up a small tree branch that was on the ground nearby.

“...What's with the stick, Grand Duke?”

“It's my weapon. Should be more than enough for someone like you.”

“Tch...! D-Don't say I didn't warn you when this is over, then!” *Oh boy... She's mad. Not that I really care or anything... Besides, her anger will prove to be her downfall if she doesn't focus. Looks to me like she's pretty easily provoked.*

A young member of the knight order stood between us to act as referee.

“Both sides ready? Very well, fight!” The moment the signal was given, Rachael thrust herself toward me. She was surprisingly agile. However, I easily dodged the attack by stepping to the left, and I followed the movement up by lightly tapping her on the head with the stick.

“Tsk?!”

“You shouldn't recklessly leap into battle, Rachael. You need to understand how your foe moves before you do anything. And when you do leap? Make sure you prepare a follow-up attack.” Rachael suddenly leaped backward with a thudding sound, before raising her left hand and quickly chanting a spell.

“Come forth, Fire! Crimson Javelin of Flames: [Fire Spear]!”

The girl shot a flaming lance at me from her left hand. I was pretty impressed she could do that at a young age... But it wasn't good enough.

I stepped to the right, and the spear whizzed right past me. It hit the barrier and swiftly dispersed.

“Spear spells are extremely easy to track. You'd be better off using that on an incapacitated opponent, or as part of a combo attack. Maybe you could use it on someone who was running in the opposite

direction. Either way, it's pointless to use in a battle like this."

"Guh...!" The girl furrowed her brow before preparing her weapon and charging toward me again. The moment she moved, I cast a spell.

"[Slip]."

"Eek!" She fell flat on her back, so I walked over and tapped her on the head with the stick again.

"I-I just fell over! That doesn't count as a loss!"

"Sorry, little lady... But you fell because of one of my spells. It made you slip over. This spell of mine is actually amongst the top tier of spells in the world, depending on how it's used, of course." Amazing spells didn't necessarily have to be destructively powerful ones. I'd been told that recently by Leen of all people.

"Nngh!" She clambered to her feet and attempted to hit me from the sides. She was definitely precise with her aim. The way she moved from left to right, attempting to land a feint attack... She was absolutely a prodigy. The fact that she was ten felt almost unreal.

But I dodged those attacks with ease and landed a few heavier blows on her body. I hadn't been training with a literal combat god almost every day with nothing to show for it, I could read all of her movements.

I kind of wondered if this was how Moroha felt when other people fought her.

"Entwine thus, Earth! Cursed Soil: [Earthbind]!"

"Hoh?" The ground suddenly rose up and wrapped itself around my ankles. It looked like she'd been concentrating her magic without me noticing.

"Come forth, Lightning! Pure Sparking Javelin: [Thunder Spear]!"

Ha! She's doing what I told her to. Guess she's good at listening, at least... But it's still not enough, kid!

"Gather forth, Water! Swirling Shield: [Aqua Shell]!"

The bolt of lightning was dispersed by a wall of water and rendered inert.

"Hiyaaah!" The moment my **[Aqua Shell]** dissipated, she thrust her weapon toward me. She got pretty close.

But it was still no cigar. I smacked her hand away.

"Owie!"

"Listen. You. Dummy. Don't charge in recklessly. Use your head."

"Shut up! You've barely hit me at all! Attack me, please! You're just running, you idiot!" Her attitude had shifted, she was being a little more honest now, I thought. She wasn't going to stop until I actually tried.

Well kid, if you really want me to... Fine.

"Spark forth, Ice! Frozen, Jolting Maelstrom: [Vortex Mist]!"

“Gaaah!” Rachael was struck by a flash of lightning. Her body was wracked with numbness, and she fell to the ground. I held back and reduced the power of the spell, so it shouldn’t have hurt her that much... Probably.

“Wh-What spell was that?!”

“A combined one. I used Water and Wind magic to create a fog that zaps my enemies.”

“What?! No fair! I’ve never heard of that!”

Fair or not, it is how it is. Don’t complain, you asked for this! Guess I’ll dial back the fancy stuff, though.

“Shape forth, Earth! Pebble From the Ground: [Stone Bullet]!”

“Hngh!” Rachael quickly contorted her body to avoid the rock I blasted her way. It was a basic Earth spell. She turned to face me, and I launched another shot her way.

“Better watch it.”

“Agh!”

“And another.”

“Eek!”

“And another one.”

“S-Stop! How come you keep shooting them?! Y-You aren’t even doing the chants! Stop ittt!” Chants ultimately served as guidelines to help connect the necessary mental link to the right spell. If you were experienced enough, you could skip that part entirely. You couldn’t use that to cast two different spells at once though, they’d cancel each other out.

Rachael clambered up and started writhing around, desperately trying to avoid the rocks I was shooting at her. *Pfft... This is pretty fun, actually.*

“ [Slip] .”

“O-Ouch!” A little stone smacked her square in the forehead as she fell over and landed on her butt. It wasn’t launched especially hard, but that definitely had to hurt. Tears started welling up in her eyes.

“Had enough yet? I think we should put an end to this soon, since —”

“I’m not finished!”

“Really now...” *Don’t you get how many times I’ve hit you already, kid? If this was a real fight and I was wielding a real weapon, you’d be dead. I’ve even been holding back on the magic, and you’re still this banged up.*

“Haaah!” Rachael gripped her sword and began charging toward me again. I easily parried all of her attacks and was curious about why she was so frustrated. She was probably angry that I’d been half-assing

my attacks. Honestly, people like her were troublesome.

"If you really want me to go all-out, then so be it. Better prepare yourself, because the next attack is ending the fight."

"Ha, alright! I don't know what you're preparing, but I absolutely won't lose—"

"[Gate]."

"What?!" I opened up a portal right beneath her feet, and she sank into it like a stone. Then, a terrified scream rang out... from high in the air.

"Auuuuuuuuuuuugh!" Rachael was five-hundred meters up in the air, plummeting down to earth at incredible speeds. I was subtly using Wind magic to keep her on course, so she'd definitely land right in front of me.

"R-Rachael?!" The young king stared upward in absolute horror, his face paling as he watched his fiancée rocket down toward the ground.

"Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeek!!"

"Blow forth, Wind! Soaring, Spinning Gust: [Whirlwind] & [Levitation] !"

I slowed down her falling speed with Wind magic and abruptly stopped her about one meter from impact with the ground. I wondered if she'd enjoyed her freefall.

"Agh... Khah... H-Hah...!"

"Give up yet?" Rachael's entire body was trembling. Her eyes looked glazed over, and her mouth flapped open and closed like a fish. Even so, she managed a tiny, muted nod.

...Oh, oh no. This isn't good... I think I was a little too effective here.

"Come forth, Water! Cleansing Downpour: [Waterfall] !"

"Ghah!" A massive amount of water suddenly appeared above the girl, and then came crashing down on to her. She was soaked head to toe.

The people watching had no idea why I did that, but Rachael simply hung her head in shame as I gently brought her to the ground.

Aw hell... Is she scared of heights or something? She must've been really scared if it affected her that much... Still, nobody should notice what she did now that she's covered in water, at least... You'd think with all that prep work she was doing before the fight, she'd have found the time to go to the bathroom...

"R-Rachael! Are you all right?!"

"I-I'm fine! Good, yes!" The soaked little girl stood up, glared at me through tear-stained eyes, and ran away from the field.

Welp. I definitely overdid it. I feel like I probably just created a traumatic memory for someone... Does this world have therapists?

"...Oh geez, I've really gone and done it now." I really should've

handled that in a little more tactful manner. I sighed quietly as Regent Rembrandt walked over to me.

"Seems I had little reason to fret, lad! Seems the lass has learned the meaning of humility, eh? She's still a beginner, and she has a long way to go yet!"

...I dunno, I kind of feel like the inexperienced one here. It literally just happened and I already regret it. I basically just bullied a ten-year-old girl until she peed herself.

I looked over to the spectators and noticed their somewhat-reluctant smiles. I couldn't exactly blame them, after seeing that.

I wondered what rumors would come out of this... Probably stuff about how the grand duke of Brunhild has no mercy toward children, or that I'm cold-blooded or something...

"I'm really sorry, King Ernest. Could you apologize to Rachael on my behalf, later? I don't think she'll want to see me again any time soon..."

"Y-Yes. I understand, don't worry. But I don't think that Rachael is upset with you, Grand Duke. I think she's mad at herself for not being strong enough."

Really...? I'm not so sure about that... And man, getting comforted by a tiny kid somehow makes me feel worse...

"U-Uhm... Well... Th-Thanks for all your help, Grand Duke..." King Cloud looked at me with a bit of a grimace. I wasn't too surprised he'd have mixed feelings on all of this. I'd kind of blundered in, bragged about my cool giant robot, and then beat up a little girl.

"Why did you use that Water spell at the end, though...?"

"A-Ah... Well, uh... she was getting a little hot in the head, so I wanted to cool her down." I gave a vague enough reply. I didn't want to mention the real reason because that would be a slight on Rachael's honor. I'd really done something terrible, though.

"...You're a very kind man, Grand Duke." Princess Lucienne smiled gently in my direction. She'd been standing and watching with her brother.

"Huh?"

Oh... You're perceptive, aren't you?

"Ernest. I'll take care of your duties for the time being, so please go and tend to Rachael."

"Oh, but..." The little guy seemed a little hesitant to leave, so he looked from his sister to me. I gave him a small nod, and he smiled before bolting after Rachael. I had a feeling he wanted to go lift her spirits.

I hope she'll be alright... I let out a small sigh, only for my eyes to meet with Elze and Linze.

"Touya... That was... a little much, wasn't it?"

“Well, you made a nice save at the end, but still...” I didn’t need them to say it. I knew I’d overdone it. Elze also seemed to have noticed why I cast **[Waterfall]** back there.

Well, even if you took that last generous act into account, I was still in the wrong.

“Grand Duke, we’ve prepared tea. Would you like to follow me?” Princess Lucienne began guiding us toward the castle. I quietly reflected on how difficult it was to have a child as your foe. I hoped that I was doing alright with Sue, Renne, and the children of Brunhild... Honestly, after that ludicrous display, I’d sort of lost confidence in myself.



We were having some tea on the balcony of Palouf Castle, and I’d managed to compose myself a little better.

I didn’t need to fall into a trap of self-hatred. I’d definitely gone overboard, and some people probably found my actions a little drastic... But it wouldn’t necessarily be a problem if they hated me for it.

Princess Lucienne turned to me.

“Please forgive us for the discourteous behavior that my cousin Rachael has shown you today...”

“No, don’t worry. She’s just a child, after all.” I certainly didn’t have a problem with it, but I was half-wondering if the Princess was expecting me to get angry and demand Rachael’s execution or something. I wasn’t a tyrant or anything! Those kinds of people were the worst.

“The fight we had was separate from social affairs. I wouldn’t see it as a slight against me or my country, so please don’t worry.” I didn’t really expect the little girl to forgive me so easily, though...

“I’m glad you feel that way. Ernest and I are thankful to you, Grand Duke.”

“By the way, Grand Duke, what do you make of the king of Palouf?” King Cloud posed a question, which caused the two of them to turn toward me curiously across the table.

“Let’s see, hm... I think he takes instruction well... But I’m worried about his general lack of confidence.” I felt like he was the submissive and negative type. I didn’t necessarily think it was bad, it was at least better than being plain.

When I thought about it, I realized that the boy and his sister were pretty different but similar in the same way. Neither of them seemed especially suited for royalty, and they didn’t care too much for court etiquette and stuff. Then again, I did that all the time.

“Does the king of Palouf have any special talents?” Linze turned to

the princess and posed a question. Linze lacked in self-confidence. Well, she'd gotten better recently, but her self-esteem wasn't so great. She probably saw part of herself in Ernest and wanted to see if he had any redeeming qualities.

"Talents... No, not really. He has no skill in battle and no talent for magic. He can kind of play the flute? But not in a way I'd call impressive..." *Damn... So the kid's just mediocre? Well... I mean, he is a king. At least he has that.*

If I grew up with a genius like Rachael near me, I'd probably end up finding my confidence diminishing by the day, though.

"Ah, though..."

"Hmm?" Lucienne looked as if she suddenly remembered something. She went back inside and quickly came back out with a small box and a folded board. I recognized it.

"That's a shogi board."

"Yes. Are you familiar with the game, Grand Duke?" *Listen lady, I invented it in this world.*

We cleared our teacups and plates, then set out the box. Just as I'd thought, it was shogi. Well, it was a little different. The pieces were squares instead of five-sided.

"Can the king of Palouf play it?"

"He can. He used to play it from morning till night, but he stopped once he found himself lacking more opponents." *Guess that makes sense. I doubt a random maid would be able to play shogi with the king... Plus with his personality, he probably wouldn't just bring it up with someone. He's way too shy with strangers.*

"He typically played against me or our uncle, but I wasn't a particularly good opponent."

"Has he played against Rachael?"

"He did, but he completely defeated her... Which made her get upset, and she flipped the table over. They didn't play again after that..." *Man... They really are kids... It's more obvious when I hear stuff like this.*

Still, I wouldn't mind playing him. I wonder how good he is.

Almost as if on cue, King Ernest walked out on to the balcony.

"Sorry for my absence!"

"Don't worry about that. How's Rachael?"

"She's okay. Sort of, anyway. She's shut away in her room, but she always does that when she gets mad..." *Hmm... She's probably fine, then. Hopefully, she eventually comes out, though.*

"Hm...? Oh!" The kid noticed the shogi set out on the table.

"I heard from your sister that you're quite fond of the game. I actually created the game, you know. I didn't think it had already gotten as far as Palouf."

“Wait, really?!”

“Really. Wanna play?” I grinned, proposing a match, which prompted the little king to start nodding his head up and down. There were practically stars in his eyes.

We headed indoors and sat down at a small, square table. Then we lined up our game pieces.

Alright, let's see here... It's been a while, but I should be okay.

“...I can't believe I lost.”

“Good game, Grand Duke.” I bowed my head, and the little king did so as well. Three times. He'd beaten me three times.

“Pfft... How miserable. I've never seen you lose so fast, Touya.” Elze giggled slightly as she gave me a sidelong glance. This kid was unusually good at shogi. I was pretty good at it, myself. But actually playing this kid head-on gave me a good understanding of just how outclassed I was. I was impressed.

“You're really good. I'd say you're probably the best person I've ever played against.”

“R-Really? I-I've only played against my uncle for the most part, though...” *I wonder if Duke Rembrandt is good at it, too... Hmm... I have an idea. It's a little short notice but I should be able to pull it off. Let's see if we can build this kid's self-confidence a little...* I opened my mouth to bring up my idea.

“You know... Brunhild's actually hosting a shogi tournament around ten days from now. Would you like to join?”

“Wh-What?! W-Would it really be okay for someone like me to do that?”

“It's no problem, honestly. You wouldn't be the only member of royalty participating. There'd be others, in disguise of course. We'd guarantee your safety, too.”

Elze and Linze side-eyed me as if to say “What tournament?” Obviously, I was ad-libbing this entirely on the spot, so I didn't have an answer for them.

The tournament might have been fake, but I was sure that Duke Ortlinde and the king of Belfast would want to join, so it wasn't technically a lie.

Besides if I had a tournament and didn't tell them, they'd get mad about it later on.

I'd just go around and recruit people I knew were talented players, and the tournament would build itself up through word of mouth after that. “O-Oh gosh...” Princess Lucienne noticed her brother starting to flail, so she began talking to him.

“Don't think too hard about it, Ernest. Taking a little trip to Brunhild might even be good for you! I can come too, you know?”

“...Th-Then yes, I-I wanna play...”

“Sounds good to me.” I grinned, then clapped my hands together. Seems I had some work cut out for me, but the end result was probably going to be pretty fun.



“...This is short notice, but I’m hosting a shogi tournament!”

“...That’s short notice, alright.” I was back in the town of Reflet. More specifically, the Silver Moon Inn. I was talking to an older man with a red head of hair, and a full beard. It was Dolan, Micah’s dad.

“So you wanna invite us to participate, eh?”

“Well, yeah. It’s not like you’ll have any advantages in the contest though, it just means you get to skip the registration rounds.” I’d recruited Dolan, but I’d also gotten Barral from the Eight Bears Weapon Shop, and Simon from the general store. They’d been playing Shogi from the moment I introduced it to this world, so they were more likely to be better than me.

“So, will you play?”

“Damn straight I’ll play. We’ll show everyone that Reflet is where shogi began, an’ where it’s done best.” *Oh, right. Totally forgot they decided to do that.*

“So, lad. How many people are playin’?”

“Uhh... We haven’t decided just yet. We’ve invited a few, and each person hand-picked are among the best of the best. You and the others will be participating starting from day two, so you guys don’t have to come over until late on day one.”

“Oi now... We can’t afford to miss watchin’ the people we might end up facing! We’ll come for day one. Micah can watch the place in the meantime.” Dolan nodded his head firmly. I told them I’d pick them up on opening day and then I left Reflet.

When I returned I called up the king of Belfast and Duke Ortlinde, along with various other royals, and roped them in as invitees.

We were going to have a baseball tournament and a martial arts tournament at the same time, so I invited the knights from other nations to come and join in as well.

I’d organized the other two events to drum up a little more interest, since shogi alone wasn’t exactly brimming with wow factor. Plus, people who weren’t familiar with the complicated rules of baseball and shogi could enjoy the more simplistic martial arts tournament.

In the end, we had ourselves a pretty crazy lineup...

“...Oh geez, this list is a little...”

“Y-Yes... This is a bit much, even if I understand why they’d want to join...” Yumina grimaced slightly as she looked over the list of participants.

■Shogi Tournament Participants

The King of Belfast (Belfast)
Duke Ortlinde (Belfast)
The Regulus Emperor (Regulus)
The Refreese Emperor (Refreese)
The King of Palouf (Palouf)
Duke Rembrandt (Palouf)
The Roadmare Doge (Roadmare)
Dolan (Belfast - Reflet)
Barral (Belfast - Reflet)
Simon (Belfast - Reflet)

■Martial Arts Tournament Participants

The King of Mismede (Mismede)
The Knight King of Lestia (Lestia)
Knight Commander Gaspar (Regulus)
General Leon (Belfast)
Captain Lyon (Belfast)
Captain Garm (Mismede)
Baba Nohbuharu (Brunhild)
Yamagata Massakage (Brunhild)
Kokonoe Jutaro (Eashen)

■National Baseball Team Participants

Brunhild
Belfast
Mismede
Regulus
Lestia
Refreese
Lihnea
Roadmare

We ended up having quite the gathering... And that was only the people we'd invited.

“...Will we have enough security?”

“We'll keep it subtle. I've asked all the people we invited to wear special protective charms that can't be seen by anyone else, and we'll have their personal guards come along in disguise, too. Obviously, we'll post guards as well. I've got Mr. Mittens keeping watch for suspicious people.” I'd also asked that Kohaku summon a couple of dependent animals to keep watch as well. Frankly, I was more worried about Doctor Babylon... She hadn't said anything about the shogi tournament, even though I knew she'd want to join... And neither Moroha nor Karina had mentioned the martial arts contest either... I'd kind of let on that I didn't want them to participate.

I didn't want them participating if I could avoid it, but I also

feared they'd ask me for something unreasonable in return.

"...It's basically a festival at this point."

"Well, I guess you're right. We're gonna have little events and street stalls up as well... Just a shame we didn't have much time to prep." It all started on a whim, after all. I felt a little bad for roping so many people into it, but they all seemed pretty excited in their own ways, so I didn't mind so much. If we did something like this again, I'd give more of a grace period for preparation.

Kousaka was just upset that I didn't give him a month of planning time, he said we could've made a lot of money if we'd been able to hype it all up. I understood his concerns, but it was just one of those things.

"Yae, Hilde, and Elze want to join the martial arts contest."

"Yeah, but I want them on call for security. There'll be other chances for them to show their stuff in the future." Those three were unreasonably powerful, anyway. They were being trained almost every day by Moroha, and they were influenced by not just my Divinity, but my sisters' as well.

That divine protection on them was really something... If they continued to be influenced, they'd grow further beyond the capabilities of regular humans.

Although the effect depended on the person being blessed, rather than the one granting them. Just because they had Moroha's divinity influencing them didn't mean it'd help them in swordplay, for example. Yumina had manifested the ability to glimpse a few seconds into the future. I assumed that was because she was being influenced by my divinity, but the ability itself was probably something inherent in her that needed to be brought out.

I didn't think it'd be fair to let anyone under divine influence enter a contest like that. I wanted everyone there to have a good time, in the end. I felt bad for them, but if I didn't stick to my guns then it could end up being a slippery slope... Moroha would use it to justify her entry.

As for the old farts Baba and Yamagata, they ignored my protest and said they'd participate in order to better defend the place.

To be fair, there was always the possibility of people coming in to do harm, so I let them get away with it. We'd erected various barriers to prevent too much harm anyway.

"Ah... That reminds me, the pope of Ramissh and Karen wanted to use the church in town, Touya."

"What for, prayer?"

"They said they wanted to establish themselves a little consultation office, so they could hear people out and offer religious counsel."

Counsel, huh...? That sounds fine by me, I guess. Those two are the kinds to dispense life advice, anyway. I wonder if the pope will go in disguise or not, though... It's kind of a big deal to have her out here.

As I pondered to myself, my phone started to vibrate. *Oh, a call!*

I took out my phone and looked at the screen. It said that the caller was... god. I was shook.

"H-Hello?"

"Ah... Touya. I was watching and I wondered... Would it be quite alright if I participated in this festival of yours? I felt a little bit like sightseeing in Brunhild, and perhaps speaking in the church about this and that... I promise I'll be no trouble!"

"...S-Seriously?"

"I would also like to meet with the gods who are down there, and confer a little. You understand?" He laughed softly, but I was staring forward in shock. I forced myself to smile as if looking up at my viewer through a fourth wall.

...Ohhh no. Ohhh sweet lord. The big guy's coming... The man himself? Down here...? Sightseeing?! I-Is the festival gonna be okay?! I mean... Surely he's not coming down as a full god or something...

Suddenly, the big fuss about gathering all the monarchs, disguising them, and keeping them safe just felt so... Trivial.

I have no idea what I'm supposed to do.



Interlude II: Stuffed Toy Fantasy

“.....” I rubbed my eyes at what I was seeing in front of me.

I certainly didn’t remember drinking any alcohol... But how else could I explain it? I was seeing double... Since when were there two Paulas?

“...Am I seeing things? Don’t tell me I’m still asleep...”

“You most certainly aren’t. There are two...” Leen let out a little sigh and spoke in an almost disappointed manner.

What, really? As if to greet me good morning, the Paula on the left raised her arm into the air and gave me a little wave. Then, she lifted the arm of the Paula next to her, making that one wave too.



“...Is it a stuffed toy? Although... You’re a stuffed toy too, Paula...” Paula was the product of Leen’s Null spell, **[Program]**. She had been engineered to act life-like, with realistic reactions and responses.

Paula was the result of over two hundred years of gradual programming. Leen could use every kind of magic except Dark, after all. The little bear was definitely impressive and could display a wide range of emotions, despite not actually being alive.

I picked up the stuffed doll that resembled Paula and raised it into the air.

Oho... It even weighs about the same... It’s really well-made... Kind of weird that it isn’t moving, though.

“Where’d this come from?”

“Linze. She’s been into handicrafts and sewing lately, and created this little Paula copy as a test-out of her skills. Did you perhaps indoctrinate her, or something?”

“Hmph... Obviously I didn’t. She just started getting interested because of that book.”

I’d brought a book back from the Reverse World. It was a little one about handicrafts and little sewing activities. Seemed like it had a lot of advice on how to make toys.

Linze picked it up and read it back to back. She grew up around a lot of children, so her natural talent for embroidery had seen a lot of practice over the years. It would probably be more apt to say that her interest was rekindled, rather than started up.

I ended up giving her a full sewing kit and a lot of cloth I had as a present, as well. It was no problem since the stuff was just sitting unused in **[Storage]** anyway. I would’ve preferred it to have some kind of use in the end.

“But this is really something... Are you sure it’s not an exact copy? By the way, did you make Paula originally?”

“I didn’t, no. Paula was actually created for me by Eris. That girl was always good at that kind of thing.”

I see... So Eris is your mom, Paula? If I remember right, Eris is the court magician of Mismede and the girl who gave me a little bit of trouble when I went to the fairy village... I guess I caused her some annoyance...

Paula turned to Leen and made a gesture. Leen had gotten pretty good at understanding her from the slightest movement.

“Hm? No, that’d be impossible. Even if I applied programming to this little one, it wouldn’t become like you for a couple of hundred years. And to be honest... I can’t remember what I did to you to begin with, Paula.” Paula looked a little downtrodden by Leen’s words.

I see... Guess the little bear asked if it could have a playmate... Well, that’s kinda cute.

Leen had slowly added different features to Paula over time, so it would make sense that she wouldn't remember the individual processes that led to Paula as she is now.

That also made Paula make seemingly random motions and actions now and then.

For example, if Paula was hit, sometimes she'd react with anger... but other times she might act sad. Paula also had a fight or flight response, but it wasn't something learned. It was something programmed into her.

Even if there was a "Get angry" response, that might manifest as "stomping your foot," or "raising your hands." It was hard to tell exactly what situation would prompt what response. And so, it was no wonder Leen had trouble recalling how to map the responses in the same way.

I enchanted Paula's ribbon with **[Storage]** and allowed the inanimate Paula to slip inside. She just had to tug the left side of the ribbon to store something and tug the right side to release it. It could only store one thing, but it would allow her to carry around her new "friend" without any hassle.

"Thank you, Darling..." Leen smiled sweetly toward me.

Man, Linze really is amazing, though... I'm not bad at painting, but this takes a whole other level of finesse.

I decided to go see Linze because I was concerned. I hadn't seen her at breakfast so I wondered if she was still asleep, it was unusual for her not to be there in the morning.

I invited Leen to come along, but she said she was going to oversee Sue and Renne. She liked to do her own thing, and I certainly didn't begrudge her that.

I climbed up the castle stairs and came out into the private area. The knights in our castle weren't allowed to come up here. Laim and the maids came through, but they typically didn't interfere much, same with my sisters.

I knocked on Linze's bedroom door. Even though we were engaged, I wasn't about to go and exhibit bad manners.

"Linze. Can I come in?"

"H-Huh? A-Ah... Yes, okay!"

...She okay? Something was funny about her voice, but I opened the door anyway.

"Hey, how are y— Ah?!" I involuntarily made a funny noise.

The room's filled with stuffed toys! There's a whole mountain of them in here... Don't tell me... Did you make all of these, Linze?! The girl herself was sitting in the middle of the room, gently rubbing at her eyes.

"...Were you sleeping sitting up?"

“S-Sorry... Seems I fell asleep...”

That's dangerous! There are needles and scissors around, you know! I took some coffee out of [Storage] and handed it over to her. She looked at it with a frown, but perked up slightly when I brought out some milk and sugar for her as well.

The caffeine in this world was considerably stronger, so it'd definitely wake her up. I wanted her sleeping properly going forwards, though...

“Mmm... Tastes good...”

“Glad you like it, but... did you make all these, Linze?”

“N-Not all of them... I bought a few to use as reference.”

Hm... I can still tell which ones you did make, though... I looked on top of the chest of drawers and recognized one of the plushies there immediately. It was a white tiger, and it looked just like Kohaku.

I also noticed plush versions of Sango and Kokuyou, as well as a cute stuffed Kougyoku. They all had really cute, chibi designs going on... and looked very well made.

“Wait, that one's...”

“Hm? Oh, eek! N-No, wait! D-Don't look at...!” It was a stuffed toy that resembled a young man. He had a white coat and black pants.

Is that... me? Heh... He's a little bit cuter than I would've expected...

It seemed like the doll Linze was scrambling for wasn't the one of me, however. The one she'd grabbed for was another entirely.

It was a doll with short, silver hair and a cute little hairband. The doll's eyes were blue, the same blue as the blushing girl by my side.

“...What a cute little doll.”

“Wh-What?! U-Uhm... D-D-Do you really think so...?”

Actually, I think both you and the doll are cute.

“Can I have one of these...? I think it'd look nice in my room.”

“O-Of course! I'm really happy that you like them!” Linze gave me permission to take one back. What a precious treasure.

She'd made an incredible amount, though... I looked around the room in wonder. There were over a hundred, in all kinds of shapes and sizes.

Most of them were little animals like cats and rabbits. They were all designed in a cute, slightly deformed style. Even I could appreciate it.

“I lost track of time... It was so much fun that before I knew it, I'd ended up making so many... I just kept getting ideas for which one to do next...”

“I understand being excited, but it's important to get your rest. People will get worried if you're falling asleep at random and stuff... It goes without saying that I'd get worried, too.”

“Okay...” Linze was a delicate girl, so I didn't want her to push

herself past her limits. She wasn't as energetic as Elze, after all.

Then again, she was pretty similar to her sister in terms of stubbornness sometimes... But I actually really loved and respected that about her, too.

"Hm? What are you making now, anyway?"

"Ah, it's not a toy this time... I was making some clothes. I thought my sister would like them."

You made these?! I took it in my hands and felt along the sleeve. There was a pretty lace sewn into the cuff, I didn't know Linze was capable of embroidery this intricate.

"Ah, uhm... I didn't actually make the lace part... That came from Mr. Zanac's store... I'm not so good at knitting, but I'd like to get better..."

Oh, really? I wondered if she'd considered working for Zanac or something. His store was rapidly expanding its repertoire lately.

As I was thinking to myself, the door opened.

"...Good morning, Linze. Oh, Grand Duke? Why are you here?" Sakura had opened the door and waltzed on in.

You ever hear of knocking, lady? She looked at us with sleepy eyes and looked between me and Linze. She was holding a lot of cloth in her hands.

"Sorry, I fell asleep earlier... Oh, did you do it?"

"I did. I cut it along the paper pattern."

Sakura laid out the fabric along a desk, they were cut into various shapes. It seemed like they were the pieces for another stuffed toy.

"Have you been helping her, Sakura?"

"Yeah. It's a puppet for my mother's school... Linze was helping make it. We've been doing puppet shows... for the kids..."

"Like this, see?" Linze held up a little cloth puppet with her hand and made it move around a bit. It was basically a hand puppet, the kind you'd see in kids entertainment shows.

"There are a lot of animals in the story... so I stayed up all night cutting the pieces..."

"Oh, interesting. I'd help, but **[Modeling]** doesn't exactly cover cloth..." That spell basically allowed me to transform natural materials and shape them how I saw fit. It didn't exactly work so good with stuff like cloth or leather.

I couldn't help with sewing or anything. I could make more needles and scissors, but that was about it... *Oh, wait...!*

"You two, I think I remember seeing something about a magic sewing machine in Babylon's storehouse..."

"Sewing machine...?" Linze tilted her head to the side. It would probably be easier to just show her. I pulled out my phone and used the internet to find some sewing machine videos. I wanted them to see

it in action, so they'd easily understand.

"Wow! That's fast! It's sewing stuff really easily!"

"...That looks useful. Mhm..."

The two of them were practically glued to the screen. The sewing machine needle moved up and down at a rapid pace, easily stitching the fabric together.

It was easy to find out how a sewing machine was structured on the internet, so building it was possible... But it was a little complicated for me. I'd maybe be able to make an older foot pedal one at the very most.

I didn't exactly know what a magic sewing machine would be like... But it would probably be a good quality one. It was a remnant of an advanced age, after all.

"So this thing's in the storehouse?"

"I think so, but— Whoa!"

"Let's go, Touya! I want it!" Linze started yanking on my arm.

Alright, I get it! Calm down, please! It wouldn't exactly be the same as the sewing machine in the video, and frankly, I didn't even know if it'd work well or even be there at all...

But I couldn't say that in front of Linze, who seemed so hopeful and excited, so I let out a small sigh and silently opened a **[Gate]** to Babylon.



"This is-a the magic sewing machine! It's-a perfect for-a the sewing, yes! Doctor Babylon didn't-a make this. It's by Rosetta!" Parshe brought out a strange device that vaguely resembled a pen attached to a small spinning wheel. Was that seriously the machine?

"This-a machine uses molto tiny and precise teleportation magic to move the thread through-a space. No needle, no danger! It-a has plenty of built-in safety features as well. No risk to fingers."

Linze tentatively tried it out, brushing the pen part against two overlapped pieces of cloth. Amazingly, sewn cloth appeared from thin air and bound the pieces together.

Wow. That's cool... I wonder how many different applications this thing has.

"This is useful, but it takes up a lot of magic... It probably won't be helpful for big jobs, but it'll speed things up."

"That makes sense to me... **[Teleport]** uses up a lot, after all..." Sakura nodded her head slowly, it was her spell after all. Though in my case, it never affected my magic much. Whoops.

Either way, I wondered if it would lessen the burden on Linze. We luckily had three of these devices, which meant other people with more magic could help her out, too.

I just didn't want her using up all her magic and collapsing or something.

"I'll be okay. I won't overdo it. If it comes to it, I'll use my engagement ring to tap into your magic, okay?" Linze smiled gently at me, holding up the ring on her left hand as if she'd been reading my thoughts. I was glad she was thinking of her health.

"We'll be able to finish in time for the show... That's good..."

"When's the show, anyway?"

"Day after tomorrow... With just Linze it would've been impossible..."

It seemed that Sakura's mother, Fiana, had prepared a lot of events at the school on that day. One of them was going to be a puppet show. It seemed to be an event for children, even kids who didn't attend the school were allowed to come by.

"There were puppets at the school, but they were all tattered... it was just easier to make new ones from scratch instead of fixing the old. I ended up going a little overboard though, haha..."

"Linze, you're too picky... Nobody cares too much about the quality of the lining, we just need to be able to put our hands in there..."

"Th-There are subtle differences in hands, you know...?"

How fussy... Well, I guess that's how artistic creators are. But I think Sakura's right here... I don't really care about puppet lining.

"I saw a puppet show when I was a kid... It was a lot of fun, but what I liked the most was the mascot character who showed up..."

"Mascot character...? What is that, some kind of wooden figure?"

Oh... I guess this world doesn't have big mascot costumes... I remember seeing some of the tribes in the Sea of Trees have animal furs that kind of resembled it... But I guess it's not close enough.

I pulled up some images on the internet.

"See? This is a mascot costume... It's like a big stuffed toy without the stuffing, and people wear it. There are a lot of these at various events in my world." The image I was showing was a mascot without the head part on, revealing the person inside. That kind of thing would upset a child, but it was the easiest way to explain what I meant.

"Wow... I want to see one..."

"Yeah! The children will love it!"

Huh? Wait a sec... You're gonna make one? Hold on now, don't go getting any ideas... Even with the magic sewing machine, it'd take too much time, wouldn't it?

"Touya... If we make the suit... can you help us with the materials...?" Linze fluttered her eyes at me... That was unfair. How could I say no?

“I... I mean... I guess that’d be fine...”

“Amazing, Grand Duke...”

“Ahhh, thank you! Sakura, let’s use the new equipment to finish everything up right away!”

“Mhm...” We got the rest of the magic sewing machines and teleported back to the surface.

...How did things end up like this?

“Master. Would-a you like-a me to help?”

“No, don’t worry... But thanks for the offer.” If that clumsy idiot tried anything, we’d just waste a lot more time.

Alright... Let’s see... Just gotta look up the materials, uhh... styrofoam, and urethane... That’ll do.

The best equivalent to styrofoam was the innards of the Treants we’d recently killed, so we had that. The urethane could be substituted by magical beasts that had pillowy skin... That wouldn’t be too hard.

I was already thinking about what the costume might look like, but it was hard to picture. I decided to leave that kind of thinking to Linze, anyways.

I headed off to fetch the required materials.



“Whooooa!! What’s this?!” Elze yelled out with joy as she hugged me through the costume.

Damnit... It’s too thick, so I can’t feel anything through it! We should’ve gone for something less fluffy!

“Whooooa! It’s a giant Kohaku! So cute!” Sue jumped up and practically tackled the opposite side to Elze. Luckily, I’d enchanted the costume with shock absorption, so it’d be fine no matter what.

The final product was a giant mascot outfit based on Kohaku. The giant bipedal result was something I’d taken to calling “Mr. Kohaku.” Though given that Kohaku was a girl, perhaps it should’ve been Ms. I hoped that this character would become somewhat of a mascot associated with Brunhild. I’d be able to move around and wave my arms in a fun way and have everyone wave back. That being said, it was hard work... I had my doubts this character would become as popular as a certain black mouse.



《My liege... What is with this strange behavior?!》

《Now now, Kohaku... Just because it looks like you, doesn't mean it has to act like you...》

Kohaku sent me her thoughts on the matter. She seemed a bit mad.

《Fufu, I think it'ssss pretty good... It looksss just like you.》

《Come now, you idiot. It loosely resembles you. Why are you getting mad?》

《Kokuyou, Luli... You two...》

《Come on, Luli... Don't tease her too much...》 I quickly stopped the quarreling before it turned into a full-on fight. Still, even if she wasn't sold on the idea, this mascot would probably be really popular with kids. Sango and Kokuyou seemed to agree.

“What's the deal with this thing, anyway?”

“Yeah, are you in there, Touya? What gives...?” Elze let go a little. She seemed puzzled.

“Ah! He can't reply, the suit has **[Silence]** enchanted on the headpiece so no noise can come out... Even if he speaks, we won't hear it!” Linze quickly explained the situation to everyone. There were a lot of mascot characters that did talk, but I wanted to cover all bases here. I figured a mute mascot would be better, because then anyone could get into the suit and play the part. It was a pretty smart decision.

“I think kids will love it.”

“Mm... We did good...” Sakura nodded to Yumina and muttered.

...Wasn't the main feature supposed to be the puppet show?

Still, it was pretty tough... I had **[Gravity]** helping me out, but my movements were still restricted.

It was hot, too. I tried to use Wind magic to keep things circulating. Surely that would cool me down... But it didn't. It was taking too long, at any rate.

Oh no... I tried to take off the headpiece but the arms of the costume were too stubby and limited in mobility. I couldn't take it off. Linze helped put it on to begin with, so I turned to her for help again.

“Sorry... Could you take the head off?”

Oh, wait. Crap... They can't hear me because of the enchantment... What do I do?! I tried to inform everyone that something was wrong by frantically wiggling and waving my arms. *C'mon! Notice!*

“...What are you doing, Touya?”

“Ah... Do you want to tell us something, Touya-dono?”

That's right, Yae! You got it! I frantically pointed towards her.

“Ohoh! I was right, I was!”

I tried my best to point the arms of the costume toward myself in

a desperate mime act.

“Pointing to yourself... So... you?”

“No, I think he means Kohaku.”

“I think he wants to see Kohaku...”

Hilde, Leen, and Lu all gave their own ideas. *Come on guys, why did this turn into charades?!* I spent a few more minutes gesturing like mad, hoping they’d realize I wanted the headpiece off. When they finally guessed it right, I fell to my knees due to mental fatigue. I’d been defeated by Linze and Sakura’s handiwork...

“...Grand Duke, you could have escaped with **[Teleport]** at any time...”

“Oh.”

Sakura spoke bluntly, and I stared blankly into space. *Damn it...*



“Woow! So cool!”

“He’s all fluffy!”

A barrage of children came at me from all directions. They weren’t doing any damage, but they sure were forceful...

It was the day of the puppet show, and my debut was proving popular. Well, it was technically “Mr. Kohaku’s” debut... We decided to just go with him being a guy mascot, since he wasn’t exactly meant to be Kohaku anyway. The kids were a little cautious at first, thinking I was some kind of weird summoned creature, but after a while, they started running at me all excitedly.

I was glad they were having fun, but they were certainly going all-out.

Hey, hey! Get off my back...! I can’t even run away because they just keep closing the distance... I can’t even run fast because of how stubby these legs are! My visibility was a bit limited too, so I ended up tripping and bashed my head... It hurt! I needed to calm down and collect myself. The kids riding on me all fell off, too...

Gh...

“**[Power Rise]**!”

“Whoa! Amazing!” I used my increased strength to quickly pick up all the kids and carry them around. I tried to gesture around to tell the kids to be a little more careful, but I wasn’t sure they were getting it.

“Alright, everyone. The puppet show is about to begin. Please come inside... You don’t want to be late, after all...” Fiana clapped her hands together and the kids began filing into the classroom. They sure seemed used to it... I was thankful she saved me.

“Are you alright? I think they just got a little excited because they’d never seen you before...” Fiana came over to check on me. I tried to say “No, it’s alright... I’m okay,” but I was muted in there... so

I just gestured it. I decided that I should probably make the **[Silence]** enchantment a toggle.

After all the kids entered the classroom, I was led into another one by Fiana where I could discard the outfit. I used **[Teleport]** to escape the confines of fluffy, child-friendly hell. The Mr. Kohaku costume promptly collapsed to the floor without my frame supporting it.

“Whew...” That was rough. There were a lot of things I could improve on.

I stuffed the mascot outfit into **[Storage]**. I didn’t want the kids to see it in that deflated state.

I left the empty classroom and headed next door to check out the puppet show. The puppet show had originally been planned by the schoolteachers working there. It seemed that Sakura had caught on, and went to Linze for help.

Yumina and Lu also helped out after hearing the story, and the four of them worked hard all the way up until the event. I played my part, too.

When I got to the classroom door, I could hear Linze’s voice. It seemed that the show had already started.

I didn’t want to interrupt the performance by butting in...

I used **[Invisible]** to conceal myself, and **[Teleport]** to appear at the back of the room.

Infiltration complete... I looked around and saw Mr. Mittens in the corner... He moved toward me, nose twitching as if picking something up. I forgot his sense of smell was great...

“...You gotta be kitten me... That you, Grand Duke?”

“...Yeah, it is. I didn’t want to cause a fuss by coming in late...” I whispered in a quiet voice, so only Mr. Mittens could hear me.

“Makes sense to meow... Just be careful, I got purretty suspicious.”

“Don’t worry about it. Just tell Sakura I’m here, it’s fine.”

“Gotcha...” Mr. Mittens left without a sound. He was certainly something... He made good security, so I could give him credit there.

At the front of the classroom, the stage was set. There were a lot of puppets, rabbit ones, bear ones, dog ones, and cat ones... all dancing along the edge of a desk. Linze and the other performers weren’t visible to the audience. All they could see were the colorful puppets. It must’ve been rough to keep their arms up for so long.

Here’s an abridged version of the story... One day, a witch arrived in a peaceful forest full of animals. The witch treated the animals unkindly, so they asked her to leave, but she was very strong, and the animals could do nothing against her individually. In the end, the animals all teamed up together and drove the witch out of the forest using their combined specialties.

The story was kind of similar to “The Crab and the Monkey.” But the theme in The Crab and the Monkey was more based around retribution. The theme in this one was a little more about working together and finding strength in unity.

“This is a nice forest, I like it! This is my forest now, animals! Eheheee!”

The witch spoke out her threat, which caused the animal puppets to tremble. I was amazed that Yumina was the one doing that creepy, hoarse old voice. She was also playing the part of the cute forest rabbits, too... She had some serious voice acting skill.

Wait a second... That sound... Is the god of music doing the soundtrack for this thing?! The kids seemed even more drawn in by the tense atmosphere, and they all sympathized with the plight of the animals.

There was one child in particular who was watching the show transfixed, a piercing gaze. He couldn’t have been more than six or seven. He was staring at the puppets as if mesmerized. It was almost like he was committing their movements to memory. Seemed like he was mumbling something too... He was a weird kid, to be sure.

Still, everyone was having fun in their own way. It was pretty hard to find a way to appeal to everyone in a room, so I was impressed they’d done this well. And as I pondered, the show moved on to the final act.

“Hurray! We took back the forest!” Linze’s cat-puppets started yelling out in joy, and the story came to a close. Sakura summoned some birds for the ending roll and had them all chirp a song in tune with the god of music’s accompaniment.

Wait... This song... What the...? I guess they’re singing it without understanding English, but I know what it’s saying... Pretty weird to hear them say “Saturday Night! Saturday Night!” over and over like that... It doesn’t really even fit!

It was a nice song, and the kids were all clapping along to the beat in no time. The animal puppets swayed to the rhythm as well. Rock and roll could unite worlds, it seemed...

The puppet show had been a resounding success.

“Ahhh... I’m so tired...”

“We did good... We did really good...”

“I had a lot of fun!”

“I almost forgot some of my lines...”

“Good work. You should be proud, everyone.”

We cleaned up the performing area and set the classroom back to how it was meant to look. We then went to eat some light food, since it wasn’t quite time for dinner. Mr. Mittens sat on Fiana’s lap, gently lapping at some matatabi sake.

...Don't get drunk, little cat knight... Sousuke had vanished along with his songs at some point, too.

"Thanks so much for your help today, everyone. The children seemed incredibly happy."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it, too!" Linze smiled at Fiana.

"You worked really hard, Linze. But please, get proper rest from now on... Don't push yourself too hard, okay?"

"Okay. I promise!" Linze let out a little giggle. I was glad it all went without a hitch.

But when we went back to the classroom to gather up the puppets, something was off.

We'd stored all the puppets in a box by the side of the stage... but now they were all missing.

"Wh-Where are they?!" Linze began a frantic struggle, looking under and over just about everything in the room. It was a pretty big box... If it was still here, we surely would've seen it.

"...A thief?" Sakura muttered quietly. I wasn't sure about that... They were just puppets. They weren't exactly worth much. What would a thief want with them? Even if they didn't have much material worth, they were still important to us... Linze looked at me, almost teary-eyed, and I resolved to find them.

Mr. Mittens had gotten black-out drunk on sake, but I tried to ask him for help. I was pretty sure his nose was completely useless when he was intoxicated, though.

"...You can't help, huh?"

"Meow...? Milady... Where... Hic... Get meowtta here... I smell... Uhm... Lemme paws here... I smell... Hic... Catnip! Haha!"

He was definitely no use. Well, I wasn't exactly mad at him. He'd been working hard... so it was fine.

"Touya, can you find them?"

"Leave it to me. I'll get them back." I nodded at Yumina and took out my smartphone. Then, I fired up the map and ran a search for Linze's hand-made puppets... Luckily, the answer was clear in a flash.

"Whoever has them hasn't left town. I'll go ahead and catch them, alright?"

"W-Wait! Take me!" I was about to **[Teleport]** out when Linze asked to join me. I wondered if that'd be alright... but I was sure she could hold her own against one or two petty crooks.

I took Linze, but wondered about the other three... I didn't think going there in droves would help.

"Alright, I'll open up a **[Gate]**. We'll have Mr. Mittens keep lookout... That way we can all go."

"Work hard... We'll eat later, okay...?"

"Gotcha... Get meow in there...!"

The woozy little cat gave Sakura a little salute. We took away his bottle, and I cast **[Recovery]** on him.

“Alright, let’s go.”

We went through the portal and came out the other side. We came out to the outskirts of town, where some new houses had been put up. It was evening, so the smell of dinner wafted through the air. The place we were headed was the house right next to the portal. That’s where Linze’s puppets were... and maybe even the culprit.

I was about to move on ahead when Sakura suddenly stopped me in my tracks. What did she want, I wondered...

“...I can hear the words... Can’t you?”

“What words?”

“Someone is speaking the dialogue from our play...”

“Huh?” *Dialogue? What do you mean?* I peeped in through a distant window and saw a young boy sitting in a room.

Oh...? That’s the kid who was staring at the puppet show all the way through... I looked at his hands, and he was wearing a couple of Linze’s puppets. That meant he was the culprit... But why did he do it, I wondered.

“I can’t make out what he’s doing properly from here... **[Long Sense]**.” I used my smartphone to display projected senses of sight and hearing in the air. That would let us all see what was going on here...

“Leave this place, you animals! Eeheeheeh!”

I was surprised at the sudden exclamation. The phone displayed the boy in the room, holding up the witch puppet. He was showing it to a little girl, laying in bed.

It looked like he was recreating the play for her.

“...He’s doing our play?”

“Sure seems like it... I saw him when the play was being performed... He was really focused on memorizing it all.” I was seriously impressed someone so young could commit all that to memory... He probably got a few details wrong but he was nailing the narrative on a whole.

The girl had a damp towel on her forehead... She was probably his sister. Judging from her occasional coughing, I assumed she was sick as well.

“I see what happened here... The boy wanted the girl to be able to enjoy the puppet show, too... That’s why he stole from us.”

“Mmh... That doesn’t mean he was justified in stealing, but... it adds context...”

Yumina and Lu nodded quietly. They were right. I didn’t have anything to add.

Yumina turned towards me.

“What do we do?”

“I don’t really know...” He might have had his reasons, but stealing was stealing. Still... Renne was a thief once... And I took her in under my household as an employee. At the end of the day, context was key. I didn’t like to judge people based on snap-decisions or hard times. “Linze, Sakura? What do you think?” I decided to ask the two victims.

“He should return the puppets, I think... They belong to the school, after all...”

“Sakura...” Before I could speak up and get Sakura’s opinion, she had stood herself up and headed towards the door of the house.

Whaaat?!

“Ah...” Sakura walked straight into the boy’s room. He had proof of his crime in both of his hands. I didn’t think sorry was going to be enough...

“...It’s wrong...”

“Huh?”

“...That line is wrong... It’s not ‘We’re gonna...’ it’s ‘We’re going to...’ okay? It’s different, see? This character doesn’t speak like that...”

She gave him a little glare, then a nod. ...*She’s giving him tips?* Sakura took the dog puppet from the boy’s hand, put it on, and walked towards the side of the bed... She crouched down until she was out of sight from the bedridden girl.

“We’re going to win against that mean old witch!” The dog puppet (Sakura) yelled out dramatically.

Why are you... doing the show, exactly? Linze giggled slightly, before standing up and heading into the house after Sakura. She took out the squirrel puppet, fitted it on to her hand, and crouched down next to Sakura.

“How could we leave our home?! This is our forest! We have so many memories here!”

Uh... Linze, you’re doing it too...? Before I knew it, Yumina and Lu had vanished too. *What the...*

“That witch can use magic, though! How can we fare against her?!”

“It’s impossible to... We can’t defeat her... We have no way...!” They’d taken the fox and raccoon puppets and were going all-in as well.

Linze’s puppet play kept on going, and the little girl on the bed seemed like she was having the time of her life... There was nothing else for it.

I entered the house and sat down next to the boy, who was staring in shock and awe at what had just happened. I looked down at the puppets on the table.

“That your sister?”

“...Yeah.”

“Wanted to show her the puppets, huh?”

“She really wanted to see them... but this morning she started getting really hot... Mommy said she had to sleep, so... I-I was gonna put them back tomorrow, promise! I promise!” The boy stammered and looked as guilty as he could. I doubted he was lying. But a crime was still a crime, and he probably had to reflect on it.

“These puppets were made for the children of the school. Even if your sister couldn’t see them, you shouldn’t have taken them. That girl over there worked really hard to make them. Do you know how sad she was when she learned they were gone?”

“I... I’m... I’m sorry...”

“Promise you won’t do this again?” The boy nodded his head slowly, a sincerely apologetic and sad look on his face.

Well, seems like he’s reflected enough. I don’t really like being tough on kids.

The little boy promised to apologize to everyone he affected, and we settled down to watch the next half of the show.



“That’s what happened, then...?”

“Yeah. But all’s well that ends well. Everyone had a great time at the show, too.”

We were eating dinner and telling everyone about what had happened. The boy apologized properly to Linze and promised he’d say sorry to Fiana later on. I gave his sister a special medicine we’d produced thanks to Babylon, which would mean she’d be fine by morning. **[Recovery]** wasn’t capable of preventing stuff like colds and fevers, after all.

“...I think I can understand the kid’s feelings... I used to worry about Linze when I was little, too...” Elze smiled softly. She seemed to understand the feelings of wanting to look after your sister.

“Whenever I slept through things or missed things as a child, my sister would always bring me things...”

“Aha...” I was glad to hear that. Elze definitely loved her sister a lot. Elze averted her gaze slightly, though... I wondered why...

“One time I did take an apple from the garden without asking... Aunt Lana got really mad at me...”

“Oh dear. But it was just one apple... Why’d she get mad?”

“No, she, uhm... trashed a whole tree trying to get it...”

“I-I didn’t have a choice! It was really high, so I couldn’t reach! I thought if I used **[Boost]** and hit the tree, it’d fall down... I didn’t know the tree would break into splinters!”

I laughed slightly. It amused me that she thought of beating the tree up before she considered climbing it. Seemed Elze was reckless even at a young age. That didn't surprise me at all.

"Mmh... This is a shame... I wanted to see the puppet show... My father wanted me to stay and study, though..." Sue had come over for dinner, she hadn't been around for an evening meal a while. Usually, she ate at Duke Ortlinde's place and came over in the evening instead.

"Don't worry... I had my mother record the show on my phone. That way, we can watch it later!" Sakura pulled out her smartphone and smiled. They were getting used to the phones, which was good.

Elze scooped up some meat on to her fork and chowed down before turning to her sister.

"Hey, what kinda story are you to make next?"

"Ah, well... I'm still thinking, but... I wanted to do a story about family... Or maybe an adventure one...?"

"A story of adventure?! That sounds good, it does! Will you require me to help you with swordplay advice, will you?! Please let me help!"

"Adventure?! That means it should be a story about knights! Linze, you should do a story about a dragon-slaying hero!"

Yae and Hilde suddenly rose out of their seats, excited. I wouldn't have minded helping out with a more exciting story, either.

"Oh, Paula? You wanna be in it too?"

The stuffed bear waved her arms around as if to say "Yes! Yes!" Leen grinned slightly. She was way too big for a puppet show, though... Unless... Maybe we could have her play some kind of giant bear that guards a forest...

"I'll help you too, you know?! Liiinze! Let's make a story full of love, you know?! I know all about love, you know?!"

"Uwaaah!" Karen suddenly appeared out of nowhere and started yelling in Linze's ear. The poor girl was so shocked she dropped her spoon into her soup. *Calm down... You're gonna give her or me a heart attack one of these days...*

If something interesting was happening, Karen had a habit of appearing out of thin air to get in on it. Her senses were way too sharp, honestly.

After finishing the meal, we decided to watch the recording of the puppet show that Fiana had made. It was a show for children, but everyone really liked it. Linze and Sakura were especially proud.

After that, the video switched to a clip of "Mr. Kohaku" being chased around by kids. *Fiana... You were recording that?*

The next day, I was in Linze's room again. She was frantically making puppets to match all the ideas everyone had given her. I felt a little sorry for her. It seemed like she'd be making more stuffed toys

and puppets for a while. Still, she seemed happy, and she wasn't pushing herself to the brink... so it was fine.

Thanks to the whole incident, I got a little interested in embroidery too.

I wonder if Zanak or Olba would be interested in marketing them with Linze's advice... We could probably start a Brunhild brand of children's toys...

...And so, Brunhild became known as a land where you could find high-quality stuffed toys. I didn't expect them to be quite so popular... but this world was full of surprises.

Afterword

Heyo! Here we are again at the end of another volume of In Another World With My Smartphone. We've finally reached twelve, wow! And guess what, my afterword is only one page again! I was wondering whether or not to put Brunhild's festival at the end of this volume... I didn't want to bloat the volume or make my readers burn out or anything, so I've delayed it.

In the next volume the festivities will begin. Look forward to it! Anyway, on to my usual thanks.

Eiji Usatsuka, my dear illustrator! Your last illustration of Kohaku is just plain adorable. I wanna hug her...

And to you, Tomofumi Ogasawara. Thank you for your incredibly cool Frame Gear designs.

To K, everyone at Hobby Japan's editorial department, and everyone involved in publishing my book, thank you so much!

And, as always, thank you to everyone who read my work when it was just a web novel.

Patora Fuyuhara

Bonus Essay and Short Story

Fear of Death

“Have you ever felt like you were going to die?”

If you were to suddenly ask me something like that, I’d answer, “Yeah, about three times.”

I’m not exactly referring to stuff I can look back at and say, “Ah, I could’ve died...” like getting sick or anything. Those instances were fine, I never really treated death as a big deal and kind of took things like that in stride. But there were a few times where the fear of death was there, ready to overtake me...

The first time was when I was in elementary school. I grew up in the Tohoku region, and we didn’t typically get a lot of snowfall. But one year it just kept coming and it didn’t stop coming... It was amazing for us kids, though. We just went out and played in the snow all day. Before that point, I’d never even seen enough snow to make a snowman, and it was suddenly there for me to play with!

I remember sitting down on my butt by the side of the road and just watching the snow. I’d even made a little cushion of snow beneath me to rest on. I lowered myself onto my back and enjoyed the day, listening to my friends have a great time... I didn’t notice the snow plow rushing down the street. This thing couldn’t have been a regular plow, it was like a bulldozer! It went right by me and covered me in a tsunami of snow. It took half a second and I was completely engulfed, I remember little me thinking to himself, “Ah... I’m dead...” Snow’s seriously heavy, you know! I couldn’t move an inch.

Thankfully, the driver realized and immediately got out of his car to check if I was okay... But I still remember the feeling of being completely immobilized, and how scary it was to think that everything was about to end.

The second incident was when I was a high school student. It was a simple accident I might’ve mentioned before. I was riding down my hill on a bike when I lost control and was hit by a car. The bicycle was completely wrecked, but I came out of it unscathed. Even so, I remember thinking to myself at the moment of impact, “So this is it... This is how I die.” I turned out just fine, though.

The third incident was also when I was in high school. I ended up going to an abandoned amusement park with a couple of friends one evening. We were on this old rooftop that had this slope along the

edge of it... And I guess we were gonna use it as a slide. I followed my friends along the concrete surface, but as I ran, I didn't realize that I was running over a pane of glass. It was so dirty that it looked the same as the concrete around it. The glass broke right beneath me and revealed a ten-meter drop... That kind of thing would've led to a serious injury if I'd hit myself in a bad place. I could barely process what was happening, but I knew I couldn't let myself fall... Thoughts like, "I'm gonna die..." gave way to, "Jump, you idiot!" and I pushed my legs off the floor and leaped toward the sloped area. It felt like time had slowed down as I soared through the air. Frankly, it was horrifying. I landed on another glass pane that thankfully didn't break, and I distinctly remember feeling my own heartbeat in my ears... I was sweating like a madman and gasping wildly. Even thinking back to it now makes my heart speed up a little more... In a way, it really made me feel alive, probably because of how close I was to death.

As much as I'd want to experience that kind of thrill again, there's a saying that goes, "A wise man keeps away from danger."

But, you know, danger sometimes finds men, regardless of whether or not they're wise.

Mortal Gods

"Fwuh...!"

The hoe came down upon the land, shaking up the roots and other plant matter beneath the earth. The god of agriculture, Mochizuki Kosuke, had been tilling soil since the early hours of the morning. His efforts were borne of an earnest desire to expand Brunhild's farmland. He could've tilled the fields in the blink of an eye had he employed his divinity, but such powers were forbidden in the mortal realms. Rules were rules. He couldn't very well call himself a god if he didn't abide by them.

"Wowie... You did a lot..."

"Ah, Agricul— Er... Dad? Here, lunch."

"Oh... If it ain't Suika and Karina... Thanks fer this."

The god of the hunt, Mochizuki Karina, along with the god of alcohol, Mochizuki Suika, had come to visit him. In this mortal realm, they were taking on the identity of Kosuke's daughters.

He looked up to the sun and realized that it was noon. This was further evidenced by the fact that Suika was holding up a lunchbox toward him, and the fact that Karina had said "lunch."

"Lu made us some lunch, which was nice... but there's no booze..."

"Obviously. Touya wouldn't be very happy if you were drinking in the middle of the day."

“She’s right, lass. We’re relatives to the grand duke down here. Can’t go an’ make him look improper by playin’ the fool, can we?”

“Alright, I gotcha. I’ll be careful not to drink. Well, about as much as I can, anyway.”

Both gods had their own doubts as to just how “careful” Suika would be.

“Ah... Wait, that sound. Is that Sosuke?”

The little drunkard started glancing around like a curious gremlin, following the sounds of guitar-strums from a nearby tree. The three of them looked up and found none other than Mochizuki Sosuke, the god of music. He was draped across a tree branch and strumming his guitar. He hadn’t been there before, he’d simply used teleportation magic to get there without being noticed. There weren’t many in the mortal realms who could teleport, but it was one of the convenient tricks that gods could employ. He made the guitar vanish and then hopped down to the ground before pulling a large square box out of thin air. Then, he began to gently pat his hands on the top.

At first glance, it was a simple box, but it was actually an instrument as well. The box was an instrument from a location on Earth named Peru. The Peruvian instrument was known as a Cajon. This one had strings and bells attached to the inside that generated sounds that would echo through a hole on the front. It was a percussive instrument that could be played by hitting it at various angles. He hurriedly tapped it at a light rhythm, as if to say, “I’d like to eat now.”

They all sat by the field and spread out the two boxes that Karina and Suika had brought with them. There were a variety of delicious-looking riceballs and many a side dish to go with them.

“Whoa, looks great! I’m so glad I came down to the mortal world...”

“Yeah... It’s been really nice. I haven’t been to the mortal realm in like... ten thousand years? It’s nice to work, eat, and enjoy myself a little.”

Suika and Karina smiled and laughed as they made small-talk. They washed their hands in a magical orb of water that had been conjured up to float in midair.

“Don’t forget that we’re here to support the kid. We ain’t just here to have a good time, got it?”

“...Aren’t you enjoying yourself the most by coming out into these fields all the time? I’m pretty sure you might be having the most fun. I haven’t even seen you come by the castle once!”

“Mh...” Kosuke quietened down and started shoveling food into his mouth as Sosuke’s drumming intensified.

“Well, I don’t mind so long as we’re all enjoying ourselves

anyway.”

“We really have to thank Touya for all of this... Or perhaps we need to thank God Almighty’s mistake?”

“I still can’t believe he dropped that lightning on a fella by mistake... When I heard that, I laughed my ass off!”

“Ahaha... It might be sacrilege, but it is pretty funny—”

As the four gods laughed together, their smartphones began to ring at the same time. The four of them awkwardly checked who the incoming caller was... and the screens simply said “god of worlds.” These smartphones had been made by Dr. Babylon... Contacting God on them would’ve been impossible. Being called by the same person all at once should’ve also been impossible... However, the four of them knew one person who was truly beyond all possibilities, god himself.

It was likely that the old man was watching them right now on his television set... The four gods quietly muttered, “Don’t look at me!” in their heads as they averted their gazes and started to eat their lunch.

And so, the lives of the mortal gods of Brunhild carried on, carefree and relaxed as ever.



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by Patora Fuyuhara

Translated by Andrew Hodgson
Edited by DxS

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